

## LD – 1.3 – Apologetics Equipping for Evangelism

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### **I. Introduction to Evangelism and the Role of Apologetics – The Zondervan New International Dictionary of the Christian Church explains the importance of “Apologetics” as:**

The use of Theology: 1) to justify Christianity before men, 2) in the claims it makes to be ultimate truth, 3) in the expectations it makes on its followers, and 4) in its universal mission in advancing the Kingdom of God. Jesus Himself was often ready to answer objections and insinuations made against Him and His teaching (cf. John 8:41-58; 18:19-24), which latter He developed and justified against His opponents (cf. Mark 2:6-12; 10:2-9; Luke 4:22-28, etc.). Paul also tried to speak about the wisdom and power of the Cross in the light of deep-seated objections (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31). Peter wrote (1 Peter 3:15) “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

**It is important to understand that the defense of our faith must be personal and real. It is thus qualified by our own knowledge of Scripture, our own experience of God, and our particular giftedness with regard to conceptualizing and delivering our defense. Every Christ Follower has a story to tell and a means to engage others with the Gospel. We can find our voice and use it with confidence.**

#### **A. Defining Terms**

- 1. Evangelism – The activity of prayer, proclamation and practical service that leads individuals and communities to “repent and believe” in the Gospel, and become reproducing entities of Faith, Hope, and Love in Jesus Christ.**
  - **Relational Activities – connecting between believers and non-believers is a fundamental pathway to faith.**
  - **Glory of God – the supernatural reality of engaging, knowing, loving, and serving a Transcendent Being where engagement with Him necessarily transforms me.**
  - **Transformational Responsiveness – one who knows God and loves God must respond to him... desiring to serve and please Him.**
- 2. Apologetics – The offering of a carefully reasoned defense for the Christian Faith. The art and science of presenting evidence that affirms the truth or veracity of Christian faith, and counters the divergent claims of opponents of the Gospel.**
  - **Classical Apologists include the Apostle Paul, Justin Martyr; while more contemporary examples include C.S. Lewis and Timothy Keller, with Dr William Craig being one of the foremost in this field... see his website at [ <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/> ], this being a great example of the theological/philosophical use of apologetics.**
  - **Dialog, Debate, Discourse, and Diatribe:**
    - i. Dialog – through which you gain more of an understanding of a person and/or an issue. Dialog is necessarily a sharing of thoughts and ideas intended to promote understanding. Dialogue focuses on what you have in common.**
    - ii. Debate – the arguing from a specific position to try to convince others of the superiority of your position. Debate necessarily expects to win an argument; understanding is not important. Debate focuses on the differences and is more of a wrestling match between combatants attempting to win their argument and prove their opponent wrong, instead of the dance that is dialogue promoting relational interaction and genuine understanding of another’s thought.**

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- iii. **Discourse** – is a lecturing teaching method where information flows mainly from teacher to student, but with active engagement encouraged through ongoing question and answer opportunities during the teaching segment. The process encourages understanding and voluntary guidance by the student.
- iv. **Diatribes** – a form of lecturing or rhetoric intended to inform or correct another. It is a confrontational method of communication often condescending, abusive or chastising in form. Its approach is to promote the superiority of the lecturer and compel submission and conformance for the ones being lectured.
- v. While there are examples in Scripture and in church history of these forms of communication, by far the most helpful for evangelism is dialogue. Dan Kimball of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz has suggested that we not only engage often in dialogue, that we should in our evangelistic forays “count conversations, not commitments.” We may never know the result of our conversations, but our focus should be intentionally casting seeds of grace for the Spirit to mature into commitments when the opportunity is ripe.
- **Apologetic Issues in the Church and its engagement with prevailing culture:**
  - i. **Science versus faith** – the church and the world has for too long placed science and faith in opposition... an “either or” rather than a “both and” discussion.
  - ii. **Hypocrisy** – those who profess faith must be proved by service to be valid are caught in the faith/works controversy that has long been the Bane of the church amid culture.
  - iii. **Validity of all religions** – many well intentioned individuals and churches have embraced an “all paths lead up the mountain” approach to various faith systems. It is crucial that Christians understand the fundamental divergent view of God between various faith systems and goal of faith.
  - iv. **Syncretism** – According to Zondervan’s New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, **Syncretism is defined as** – The mixture of various systems of thought; a union of opposites on the basis of what they hold in common. Syncretism can also be thought of as an attempt to distinguish between essential and non- or less-essential elements in a religion or philosophy. **The result of which leads to a blend different faith concepts mixed with Christian theology into a “spiritual smorgasbord” approach that suits personal desires or sensibilities, rather than understanding the fundamental conflicts of these divergent faiths and the heresy this process often results in.**
  - v. **How can you really know God** – Gnostics believed that we need a special initiation and secret knowledge that is available to only a few, rather than accepting faith as a gift on God’s terms.
  - vi. **Reactions to crackpots** – when we don’t really know what we believe, we have a hard time identifying a prophet from a crackpot.
  - vii. **Moral relativism** – a concept that an absolute truth that threads consistently through redemptive history doesn’t exist, and thus we can compromise moral and ethical truths to remain “relevant’ or attractive to the next generation and their changing cultural environment.

- viii. Pain & suffering – many hold views of God that are inconsistent of Scripture, such as God can't really be “good” if He allows pain and suffering. Scripture presents pain and suffering as a real result of the Fall... we live in an imperfect world with broken people living confused and selfish lives. The existence of pain and suffering does not detract from the goodness of God.
- ix. Salvation is for only a few – free will and God's Sovereignty are at play with the problem of pain and suffering along with the notion that God never intended humanity would enter heaven in great numbers. This is a lie that denigrates the goodness of God and the power of Grace.
- x. Each person is a “relative free agent god” – this heresy teaches that we are each an independent “I am” – as opposed to “individual works of art” by one Creator, where we have different roles in the world and place in eternity.
- xi. If God wants none to be lost – Why doesn't He do something to unequivocally prove His existence to everyone? At essence this concept places me in the position of arbiter of what is right and wrong and how God ought to operate His creation.

### B. Different Levels of Dialogue & Faith Conversations :

1. Level 1 – “Water Cooler Chat” is a very low level known more for pithy jokes and impersonal banter rather than real conversation. It is low level because there is no risk involved; it exposes nothing about the individual, and expects nothing from them.
2. Level 2 – “Influence and informal discussion” is where those involved in dialogue seek to learn about each other and know enough about one another that they are more open to relational risk in engaging one another. In this level of interaction we allow another's thoughts to have some form of influence over our thinking or life actions in a mutual relational environment.
3. Level 3 – “Proactive sharing” is dialogue between equals who share openly and honestly enjoying the interaction without unnecessarily attempting to affect, defend, or motivate the other. This is respectful interaction that is open and honest and vulnerable.
4. Level 4 – “Leadership initiatives” or “apologetic leadership” is a type of conversation that tends to avoid pre-existing intellectual prescribed ideologies, and moves into the deeper level of individual contemplation and discovery. This is really about deeper knowing and being known between individuals.
5. Level 5 – “Intellectual & Spiritual Revolution” is a type of conversation that is for deep thinkers who stretch, share, and probe their own mind and heart in the company of another. This level is looking for ways to affect personal and cultural change with dreams not only in themselves but also in a wider social environment of revival and transformation.

### C. Some Surprises about Apologetics and how it plays out in Evangelism:

1. Scripture never defends God's being in nature – instead it assumes it. The Bible is trying to get people out of the graded hierarchy of worldly religious beliefs into a deep contemplation and transformational relationship with God: Animism => Polytheism => Henotheism => Moral-ethical Humanism => Moral-ethical Monotheism => Deeply Relational Monotheism. The surprising truth is we began with the highest level of monotheism and devolved... this is the opposite of what cultural anthropologists teach.
2. Some of the greatest moments of impact for the Kingdom of God occurred when God's people were in humble and oppressive circumstances. It seems counter-intuitive but prosperity tends to numb us to God, and we tend to rely on our own talent and ability rather than the

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supernatural dependence upon God. The Christian life we are invited into is profoundly counter-cultural since we rely upon God rather than ourselves. Hence, if we can build a church in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium AD in extremely liberal places like Santa Cruz and Silicon Valley, we can truly build it anywhere.

3. The word evangelist only occurs a few times in the New Testament – Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; II Tim: 4:5. The message that Scripture presumes is that all God’s people were actively involved in outreach... we are all “ministers of the Gospel” and “ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.” William Temple said of the Christian Church that, “We are the only voluntary organization who exist for the benefit of others.”
4. Most of the miracles of Jesus occurred in openly evangelistic settings... with these supernatural events being recognized as “signs and wonders” that God was doing great things among them. The role of supernatural life and signs and wonders is a hotly debated topic in Christian circles.

II. Discipleship Basics for Development of an Apologetic – There is a wealth of topics and content on the Authentic Discipleship web site, please review as much as you can as it will ground and inform your understanding of Biblical Literacy and Spiritual Formation and their role in Leadership Development. For the interests of this article, I’ll refer you to three articles on the web site under Leadership Development/Discipleship Studies:

- A. Who is God? <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.1%20-%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Who%20is%20God.pdf>
- B. Jesus Mission of Redemption - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.2%20-%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Jesus'%20Mission%20of%20Redemption.pdf>
- C. Spiritual Warfare - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.3%20-%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Spiritual%20Warfare.pdf>

III. Scriptural Survey & Apologetic Discussion – A major challenge for Christians, who are based in Western Philosophical thought, is that we tend to see the New Testament as the complete expression of the New Covenant and as a consequence we tend to neglect the Old Testament foundation. We need to understand that the Bible is an integrated work of God’s Self disclosure... it begins in a Garden on the best place on earth, and it concludes in a New Heaven and earth creation in the best place in the universe. The Bible’s revelation occurs within redemptive history... from Garden to New Heaven earth (Diachronic development). As such, the Old Covenant is foundational and sets the table for the New Covenant. Think of these Old Testament concepts as planes that take off in the Old Covenant and land in the New... significant thematic revelations start in the Old Testament and are essential for the proper interpretation of the New Testament (Hermeneutics). The following is an extremely brief discussion of some of the thematic development of these Old Testament Books [for a much expanded discussion refer to Authentic Discipleship/Biblical Literacy/Bible Survey].

- A. Genesis – the Book of Beginnings:
  1. Chapters 1-3 reveal the Creator-creation relationship & the uniqueness of that relationship.
    - In all non-Biblical creation accounts, earth is created out of the struggle among proto-gods... typically out of the carcass of a god. In the Bible creation is an act of delightful, purposeful, and even playful outworking of the love and joy within the Godhead.
    - Uniqueness of the Fall – humanity was created for intimacy and relational interaction with God, the Fall expresses the damage done due to sin rebellion.

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- The foundation of Hope – 3:15 demonstrates from the beginning that God was completely vested in His creation and especially humanity, and intended to redeem what was lost.
  - 2. Chapters 4-11 reveal the continuing escalation of the depravity of the Fallen human condition.
  - 3. Gen 12 establishes the calling out of a remnant of humanity who are a people special to God.
    - God called [invited] Abraham not to exclude others, but to be the standard [archetype] of a new relationship to God through faith so the world could be blessed through him.
    - This calling provided a sense of historical perspective that is repeated through the ages of redemptive history.
  - 4. Gen 19 reveals God’s intent to destroy wickedness and evil.
  - 5. Gen 22 reveals the concept of substitutionary sacrifice.
  - 6. Gen 25 through Jacob and Esau reveals the concept of the faithful responding to God out of worshipful dependence, rather than by birth right.
  - 7. Gen 28 reveals through Jacob’s vision of a heavenly ladder the element of God’s messengers engaged in creation.
  - 8. Gen 32:22ff reveals the difference of striving [contending] against God’s messenger, as opposed to striving against the world to advance the Kingdom of God. And who’s to say that Jacob’s wounded hip helped raise the latent compassion of Esau.
  - 9. Gen 37:ff is the story of Joseph... this reveals a young man who’s pride and arrogance had to be broken before God could use him to save Jacob’s family and God’s People. It’s a story of God’s provenance playing out in redemptive history... where Paul’s NT statement plays out – that “all things work for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).
- B. Exodus – The Book of Deliverance from Slavery:**
- 1. Ex 1 – reveals the oppression of God’s people which demands action.
  - 2. Ex 2 – reveals that similarly to Abraham who is rightly regarded as the father of faith; God’s answer to the Hebrew problem is a Man – Moses regarded as the Law Giver.
  - 3. Ex 3-6 – God reveals Himself and calls and prepares Moses to deliver His people.
  - 4. Ex 7-10 – Spiritual plagues brought against Pharaoh to reveal God fighting for His people. The basis for “Jihad” or “Holy War” is shown here as God intervening for His people who passively follow in faith. This is way different from the Muslim extremist concept of fighters inflicting pain and suffering on others to win their cause.
  - 5. Ex 11-12:30 – This is the Passover saga – which sets the underlying basis of Jesus death on the cross as God’s Passover Lamb. It was necessary that Jesus would die on the Passover... and that God in Trinity would solve humanities problem of sin and death. This is Jihad in the most amazing of applications, as it displays God entering history and supernaturally acting on behalf of His people.
  - 6. Ex 12:31-14 – the Exodus is a picture of the extraction of God’s people from pain and suffering into the promise of hope and a new life in a new land. The NT application is not merely the physical extraction and resultant requisite discipling necessitated in a community living in the Presence of God, but the foreshadowing of the Spiritual indwelling of the Spirit that would be released after the Cross and Resurrection on Pentecost.
  - 7. Ex 15 – the song of Moses and Miriam reveal the proper response to God who intervenes miraculously on behalf of His people – joyous and jubilant worship!

8. Ex 16 – trouble on the way to paradise... God’s provision of Manna is grumbled against... the people are given miraculous provision and want meat; they are given meat and want to go back to Egypt. This sets up another axiom... it takes 40 days to get Israel out of Egypt, and 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel.
  9. Ex 19-20 – Mosaic Covenant revealed – Law given
  10. Ex 25-35 – God dwelling with His people – The Tabernacle. God is working to unveil His truth so man and God can have a relationship and live together.
- C. Leviticus – The Book of the Covenant for Worship and Sacrifice conditions under the Law of Moses [AKA Sinai Covenant]. This is the basis for Tabernacle & Temple worship.
1. Introduction of Jewish ceremonial [AKA ritual] worship – this material works to integrate Heaven and earth in the Old Covenant includes Exodus 25-40, all of Leviticus, and Numbers 19.
  2. In this material God shows Moses the necessary rituals His people are to employ in their worship. All of this has implications for the New Covenant which of course they had no understanding of. Such is the “diachronic” progressive revelation of God through redemptive history... where the symbolism of the old rituals affirms Messiah’s ministry and the ongoing mission of the Church.
- D. Numbers – The Book of the Wilderness Journey: Numbers is a tough book for any disciple to trudge through, but God purposefully included it in Scripture. One is then compelled to wonder what benefit did God intend for His people to derive from this book? Origen was a third century church father who wrote a long series of sermons on the book of Numbers. Origen found in Numbers wisdom, insight and encouragement for the “Disciple’s Wilderness Journey.”
1. The wilderness experience is one that every Biblical character experienced in both the old and new Testaments. It stands to reason that it is something all of God’s people will experience at some point in their walk with God.
  2. In the Authentic Discipleship article “Assessing the Seven Stages of the Faith Journey” [Leadership Development/Mentoring and Coaching <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%204.2%20-%20Assessing%20the%20Seven%20Stages%20of%20the%20Faith%20Journey.pdf> ], the wilderness journey is shown and discussed in greater detail. Please refer to this article for a more complete discussion of this important topic.
  3. Numbers is a recital of God’s faithfulness amid humanity’s faithlessness. Where humanity know God but seek to live life on their own terms, God’s holiness and grace is displayed. This is a complex story of the people’s unfaithfulness, rebellion, apostasy, and frustration... set against the background of God’s faithfulness, presence, provision, and forbearance. Because of the spiritual distance and dissonance between God’s Perfection and humanity’s imperfection, there results the necessity of:
    - Separation of God and His people – impure people cannot remain in the Presence of a Pure and Holy God. Not that He can’t take it, but rather we can’t take it... it would totally destroy us.
    - Separation of the clean and unclean – among the people and creation there are elements that are clean and unclean... to be in the proximity of God in ritual purity requires ritual cleansing. This reinforces the distance between a Clean and Holy God, and humanity in its unclean and fallen condition.

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- Separation of the faithful and the faithless – where all are invited and some are specifically called; only those who endure in faith may approach God.

### E. Joshua through Samuel – Books of the Early or “Proto-Prophets”

#### 1. Characteristics of “Former Prophetic Scripture – Paul House suggests 5 characteristics:

- They assess the past based on God’s Covenant with Israel.
- Predictions occur in the context of noting how God has blessed or punished Israel in the past, and stating what specific promises the Lord makes to individuals [as to David].
- They create plot by selecting events and persons for inclusion that fit the prophetic view of past, present, and future.
- They assess characters in the story based on their conduct and whether they help gain to promote loss in terms of the Promised Land.
- They encourage the return to the Lord so they may experience blessing instead of punishment [Deut 27-28]. The book of Deuteronomy heavily influences the prophetic writers.

#### 2. Historical Timeline – approximate dates based on tradition, textual context, cross-textual analysis, and archeology. Although there is room for discussion and even argument, these dates seem plausible for our purposes of cultural & historical context. The difference between the myth & fable of most other faiths, and the historical reality of these Biblical characters and the written record of their life and actions places the Judaic-Christian Scripture on much stronger ground. Add to this the known treasure of ancient texts supporting the relevancy and accuracy of the Bible. Here is a brief timeline of ancient events:

- Bronze Age in the Ancient Near East – 3300-1200 BC
  - i. Early Bronze Age – 3300-2200 BC
  - ii. Middle Bronze Age – 2200-1550 BC
  - iii. Late Bronze Age – 1550-1200 BC
- Abraham – 2166-1991 BC
- Moses – 1526-1406 BC
- Exodus and Wilderness Wandering – 1446-1406 BC
- Joshua – 1466-1375 BC
- Judges Period – 1375-1050 BC
  - i. Othniel – 1350-1310 BC
  - ii. Ehud – 1309-1229 BC
  - iii. Deborah and Barak – 1209-1169 BC
  - iv. Gideon – 1162-1122 BC
  - v. Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Jephthah – 1078-1072 BC
  - vi. Samson – 1075-1055 BC
  - vii. Eli – 1100-1060 BC
  - viii. Samuel – 1105-1020 BC
- Iron Age Begins – 1200 BC
- The Early Hebrew Monarchy - The United Kingdom [1 & 2 Samuel & 1 Chronicles]
  - i. King Saul – 1050-1010 BC
  - ii. King David – 1010-970 BC [Psalms]
  - iii. King Solomon – 970-930 BC [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon]

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### iv. The Later Hebrew Monarchy – The Divided Kingdom – 930-586 BC [1 & 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles]

3. Thematic Development – Outcasts are shown as being a part of God’s plan. God uses people who are both unremarkable and/or socially undesirable and performs remarkable things through them to advance His redemptive mission on earth... dramatic examples include Rehab, Ruth, Esther, Samson, David, and Solomon.
- F. Psalms 95-99 – The Book of Worship Literature... where God is praised as the Supreme and Only God:
1. The political & social problems of under Solomon and his successors led to Syncretism that had the Jews cutting political and economic deals with local peoples & their deities – which ultimately ensnared the people.
  2. They tolerated what they knew to be untrue and wrong, and compromised their moral & ethical integrity in the process of diluting their spiritual commitment to God.
- G. Job – The Book dealing with the problem of pain and suffering: This is allowed by God who is characterized as All Good, and All Powerful... how then can God permit pain and suffering on earth when He can clearly eliminate it? The answer is very complex, and humanity only sees part of the bigger picture – only that which is obvious to us or that God has revealed to us in Scripture is apparent.
- H. Proverbs & Ecclesiastes – The Books of Wisdom Literature... knowledge is very good, but knowledge alone is not transformational. Biblical Literacy is key to know who God is and discovering my identity in Him. However, Biblical Literacy is only part of the process... Spiritual Formation is key to experiencing the goodness, awe and wonder of God... these allow for transformational life development. Intellectual “Knowledge” of the Scriptures alone doesn’t get you to a transformed nature; instead “Wisdom” is knowledge that has been digested through our own personal relationship and experience with God which gets us past our intellect into an integrated heart [EQ] and mind [IQ] that is transformational. This is the goal of authentic discipleship.
- I. Isaiah 40-66 – Isaiah foresees something new... a picture of Messiah God will send, Emanuel... God with us! This is the ignition of the Good News revealed in the Gospel of Jesus:
1. Monotheism – Isaiah preaches of the Sovereignty of God & the silliness of bowing down to things made by the hands of men. Israel is doomed when the created fail to worship their Creator and instead turn to objects they have created out of their own wisdom. God alone is God... and He alone is to be worshiped as such.
  2. God is at work throughout history and because of His sovereignty works even through the pagans and those who don’t know Him. This was part of Jonah’s dilemma... God chose to use a people who were less righteous than the Jews to punish faithless Israel. We see a picture of God who cannot be cowered, manipulated, or defeated.
  3. The “Suffering Servant Songs” – there are 5 passages that focus on the coming Messiah... Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53; 61:1-3. In these passages we learn that Salvation is introduced through the suffering of the Righteous Servant... Jesus who is the Messiah.
  4. Isaiah has a vision of hope breaking through the pain and suffering of the day... this theme lands nicely in Colossians.
- J. Matthew – Jesus promised we would be with Him always!
1. 1:22-23 – Jesus is the Emmanuel – God with us... God living among us.
  2. 28:20 – I [Jesus] am with you always.

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- K. Mark – Great Commission appears somewhat to be an appendix to the text – but Mark’s conclusion is that supernatural power will be available to Jesus’ disciples to accomplish God’s purposes.
1. Luke – wait until the power comes upon you.
  2. John – as the Father sends me, I am sending you.
- L. Acts – Is the Book of the early Church... providing a compelling history of the early Church movement, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles presents a “Mission Narrative” of an expanding circle of Grace flowing out from a closed Jewish community in Jerusalem. The Jews vision of Paradise on earth was a Jewish nation... this was exclusive and inward looking. Jesus through His apostles reveals an inclusive and expansive Gentile/Messianic Jewish Church. By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century the church is primarily Gentile. There are a number of surprising and inspiring things we find about the Church in Acts:
1. Communalism – 2, 4, 6... “Love Offerings” as a means of meeting each other’s needs out of love of God and love of one another. This is giving in the “New Covenant of Grace” and a radical change from the “Tribute Tithe” as compelled by the “Old Covenant of Law.”
  2. Spirit being poured out upon the disciples and active in transforming individuals and their community – 2, 4, 8, 10, 19. This is also the message of the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42.
  3. Transformation & multiplication of believers – Acts 2:40-41. Note that Peter preached and the Spirit brought God’s people through the “Forgiveness Cycle” of 1) conviction, 2) remorse, 3) repentance, 4) restoration, and 5) reconciliation.
  4. The Church Visible is both “Attractional & Persecuted” – It is recorded in the historical records that over 1 million Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians were put to death rather than renounce their faith in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The more Christians were persecuted and martyred, the more non-believers observing this macabre spectacle concluded that people do not die for a lie. The faith of these early Christians who embraced their death with psalms and praise confounded their detractors.
  5. Jesus disciples in the church demonstrated a responsive community both in crisis and in need – and this was a very powerful attractional component.
  6. God promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through him (Gen 12:3), and it came to pass in the New Covenant.
- M. Romans – This is the Book of Paul’s Theology for the Church... with Romans 15 and II Corinthians 5 – these effectively comprise Paul’s personal mission statement.

### IV. Apologetic Theological Issues related to Evangelism:

- A. Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God – Internal [in the church] & External [in the community]: Where do my actions start and end, and God’s take over? What does it mean to evangelize? When and how is it done?
1. Evangelism necessarily includes Discipleship – Maybe we’re done with our initial evangelistic efforts when there are self-sustaining and recreating relationships in the Christian community.
    - Evangelism that counts commitments without the investment in developing disciples is not what Scripture supports.
    - The “Go” of evangelism and the “teach and train” of discipleship are inextricably joined together in the Great Commission.

2. There is always a dynamic tension between the consumer and discipler, especially in the American church with its consumerism mentality and lack of desire to submit to any leadership. When it comes to our preaching and teaching we need to consider the following:
- Are we adequately teaching personal responsibility for spiritual growth and development?
  - Why do some grow and others don't?
    - i. Lack of growth is usually due to an inadequate understanding of the Cross and of my own personal identity as a child of God [Imago Dei] and a disciple of Jesus [Imago Christi].
    - ii. Lack of passion and purpose is usually due to my failure to having Jesus as my Lord, not merely my Savior. I have been bought at a price and need to be surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus the King. My desire should be to perform His will... living in the "Wilderness" is trying to do the things God is inviting us into out of my own strength and wisdom. Becoming a "living sacrifice" means submitting our will is the key to following Him... <sup>Ro 12:1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.
  - The Goal of Discipleship – is realizing the fruit of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission – it is submitting to Jesus' Lordship as a Living Sacrifice, and entering into our own mission field as ministers of the gospel of Grace. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11) is expected to be demonstrated in the life of all true Christ followers.
  - Integrated Discipleship – The relationship of prayer and my Spiritual life [spiritual formation], with discipleship preparation [Biblical literacy], and with my response to God's leading and invitations in engaging in my ministry [leadership development]... is always a collaborative interaction of my will being submitted to God's Will through His indwelling Spirit.
- B. Preaching and Teaching the Gospel Message is to invite the hearer to:
1. Repent – the forgiveness cycle as revealed in Scripture is five-fold: 1) Conviction, 2) remorse, 3) repentance, 4) restoration, and 5) reconciliation.  
[ see <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.11%20Prayer%20Practicum%209%20-%20Forgiveness%20Study.pdf> ]. The Spirit brings conviction and reconciliation... but we are responsible for our responses of remorse, repentance, and restoration. Professing "belief" through a 4-step gospel tract is an initiation to God, but is short of the transformation God desires.
  2. Believe the good news – Trust and faith are necessary components that get us past our own reasoning power into the realm of the supernatural. It usually means getting past our own strength and understanding... not unlike the problem of the Rich Young Ruler who knew the Truth but wasn't ready to submit to Jesus Lordship (Matt 19:16-22), and the thief on the Cross (Luke 23:40-43). Getting past your own wisdom and understanding and recognizing our need, and casting yourself upon God's Grace are key faith elements because they are transformational. However, we live in a culture where many find it increasingly difficult to trust... we need to recognize that we have different thresholds of trust, but God is capable to get us past ourselves... [see <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/Family%20Atmosphere%20Survey%20-%2015%20Questions.pdf> ].

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3. Be obedient to Jesus' commands – the Great Commandment and the Great Commission require knowing the Truth and being obedient to Jesus... [see <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.5%20Prayer%20Practicum%203%20-%20Developing%20Spiritual%20Vitality.pdf> ].
4. Jesus as Lord and Savior are inseparable and are progressively learned and understood, and is fleshed out within the discipling community depending on the soil that is our life.
5. To affirm the believer with important symbols of the faith – such as water baptism proclaiming our change from death to life, and communion proclaiming our continued dependence on and fellowship with Jesus and His church. This is a further development of the Old Covenant theme or reversal... from death to life.
6. To affirm each individual's faith:
  - Through developing relationships with other believers.
  - In joining with a local church community to accept guidance from mature elders, and to become personally engaged in serving the Gospel locally.
  - There are no second class citizens in the Kingdom of God... you don't get in because of your parents or friends... it is personal between you and Jesus – Matt 7:21-23.
7. Inviting them into discipleship – to learn and live the ways of God.
8. To share their faith with others – to become reproducers.

### V. The Relationship of the Church to the Mission of Advancing the Kingdom of God [Missio Dei]:

#### A. Christian Evangelism Overview:

1. Historical "Waves" of evangelical outreach began with the early Church:  
Catholic => Lutheran => Anglican => Ana-Baptist => Pentecostal
2. The move of evangelism has gone south into Central America, South America, and South in Europe into Africa, South from Russia into India and Asia, and now into Muslim nations.

#### B. Modern Evangelism involves Global Christianity:

1. New threats occurring within the Church with the problems of:
  - Faith and secularism – there are many who believe that the message of faith and the demands of discipleship have to be softened to become more attractive to an increasingly un-Christian and secularized world. The Scriptural mandate of the Church being "salt and light" to the prevailing culture is being subverted as the prevailing cultural norms and values invade the Church. The Church needs to remain separate from culture yet engaged with it. [see more on this important topic at <http://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/march-2011/be-separate/> ].
  - Neo-fundamentalism – this movement hails from the roots of Calvinist legalism and adopting a more rigidly Mosaic-Law adherence, with a skeptical view of Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology. The overall integrated view of Biblical Literacy and Spiritual Formation is far more compelling than the academic exercises of conformance to fundamentalism. In recent times the 5 point TULIP argument has been expanded to a 7 point and 30 point argument. The result is a legal strait-jacket that is not transformational and impossible to live under. It is reminiscent of the legal strait-jacket Jesus chastised the Jewish leaders (Matt 11:28-30). New

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- Neo-liberalism – this movement hails from a universalist post-renaissance ideal that all religious faiths are equally valid and an “all paths lead up the mountain” mentality. The notion that Grace is so potent and compelling that none will escape it is the “Cheap Grace” argument Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote of in His book The Cost of Discipleship.
  - A Balanced Approach – is advisable... refrain from the extremes of adherence to the law and complete freedom under Grace. Neither is the faith consistent with the 1<sup>st</sup> century Church.
3. Threats to evangelism from the outside – we need to more deliberately work at separating Christianity from Western Culture and Western Civilization expansion.
- If you ask a Muslim “what do you think of the West?” – Christianity and hypocrisy come out in the same breath.
  - If you ask an Orthodox Christian the same question, apostasy and heresy are the usual answers.
  - Exporting “Christian faith packaged in American culture and values,” has been employed in Japan and elsewhere in the modern world without much success. This failure ought to warn us to take a different approach. The Biblical example demonstrates that Paul and the early Evangelicals engaged divergent cultures as an intentional counter-culture. They were ambassadors of the Kingdom of God in their focus of engaging these cultures.
2. The Christian Church is a bifurcated entity with the “Church” verses the “church:”
- The institution of the “church” is an organization that remains a part of the fallen nature of humanity that longs for redemption. This is true because it is led by imperfect human beings still influenced by their sin-nature. As the organization’s political power and influence increases, unfortunately its spiritual power decreases.
  - The “Church” on the other hand, is the Organism we refer to as the Bride of Christ. It is composed of all Spirit indwelled disciples. The Organism has the indwelling Spirit perfecting the Bride from the inside out, in the life-long process of sanctification that won’t be complete until we reach Heaven. As leaders, our missional focus needs to be on the “Church” rather than upon the “church.”
- C. Modern Evangelical Mass-Media Expressions include:
1. Crusade evangelism – such as Billy Graham and Luis Palau have huge outreaches to thousands throughout the world. While effective in gathering numbers, the actual emphasis on discipleship in small communities is often lost along with the transformational expectations of a “Spirit-Filled life.” These approaches often serve as an introduction to Jesus, but don’t necessarily connect individuals in a discipling community.
  2. Alpha Tabletop introduction – also known as “hospitality evangelism.” Is another useful means of engagement in small communities with integration back into the church structure.
  3. Liturgical Evangelism – outreach through preplanned Scriptural studies, worship and special music programs is another popular form of introduction to Jesus, but also requires engaging in local discipling communities.
  4. Social Justice Outreach – addressing social needs as a means to outreach such as feeding the poor and homeless and missional outreach such as YWAM’s Homes of Hope - <http://www.ywamsandiegobaja.org/homes-of-hope/> that foster personal engagement in serving others basic needs or shelter and security.

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5. Individual communication outreach – was extremely effective in the early Church as well as with the “Jesus Movement” of the 60’s and 70’s. This personal approach to evangelism and discipleship is still the most effective in transformational life change.

### VI. Apologetics Thought Approach and Relevant Resources:

- A. Evangelistic thought approaches Need to Change to Affectively Reach a Different Society – this doesn’t mean you compromise the truth, but rather to make it relevant and understandable to your changing audience, and where different people are at the time:
  1. Josh McDowell’s Evidence that Demands a Verdict was an extremely import resource in the 70’s and 80’s, but culture has changed and it won’t win many today. Though Christians involved in outreach need to know the facts in support of our faith, the need for making faith relevant to our mission field and personal is more important.
  2. Timothy Keller’s The Reason for God – Belief in an Age of Skepticism is a much more relevant book for today. The topics he approaches and the manner in which he develops his thought process is much more compelling than McDowell’s approach.
  3. The biggest difference is our being in a “Post Christian-Post Modern” culture. Most people do not accept Scripture as a standard of thought let alone conduct:
    - Creation is no longer assumed – naturalists, existentialists and postmodern thinkers have rejected the “creationist” argument popular with the more fundamentalist thinkers. However, they can be approached with the “intelligent design” scientific/faith fusion as a new approach to dialog.
    - Recounting God’s liberating activity throughout history [Exodus, etc.], has little penetration because the Bible is not considered historical, and the ancient Jewish culture to which it was written is not relevant. However, a personal application of how the Biblical accounts play out in my life today is more compelling.
    - Wisdom literature – teachings from Scripture make great connecting points to today’s issues... the poetry of wisdom literature is much more intriguing than some old stories. Through the poetry we make the story relevant.
    - Issues of conscience and religion – Acts 14 & 17; Rom 1-2 are evidence that most people have common values and ideas that can be drawn back to Scripture.
    - It is far more impactful to paraphrase Scripture without giving specific references that tend to close people off. Emphasize “Ancient Literature” or “Eastern Writings” and Scripture in general which is regarded as cool.
  4. Consider the story Paul employed in his appeal to Athens and the Mars Hill Greek community. In Acts 17:17-34 there is a story recounted about Paul making an apologetic defense of the Gospel in a manner his audience could understand.
    - In 17:23 Paul refers to the altar to “An Unknown God” for the basis of his argument. This was an historical account of Epimenides who was brought to Athens to help the Athenians appease a god who had inflicted the city with a plague.
    - This story the Greeks would have known... Epimenides offered a clever plan that solved the Greeks problem. He identified a number of locations and had altars erected “to an unknown god” – by the time Paul came on the scene only one altar remained, but Paul knew the local history and employed it to make a connection in which he could proclaim the Gospel.

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- Paul’s knowledge and use of this story had to have pleased the Athenians, and make his message more open for their consideration.
  - For a wonderful read on this and similar topics, read Eternity in Their Hearts – The Untold Story of Christianity Among Folk Religions of Ancient People by Don Richardson. Throughout this book Richardson cites examples of “Gospel Bridges” that opened the door to effective preaching. The story of Epimenides can be found on pages 15-25.
- B. Discipleship Approaches also need to change – the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach of the past no longer works in our segmented and pluralistic society. Authentic Discipleship and The Journey of Monterey Bay have embarked on a collaborative multi-church regional ministry outreach to disciple Christians and develop leaders for service in their local church. We have developed a unique means to help people self-identify where they are on their journey... “The Journey Map” with descriptions developed, and then matching resources that speak better into their life experience. For more on this topic, see <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%204.2%20-%20Assessing%20the%20Seven%20Stages%20of%20the%20Faith%20Journey.pdf> .**
- C. Three Great Challenges for the Church to Engage in our Generation:**
1. Hostility toward the “Great Urban West” with an increasingly “post-Christian West” – Many developing countries envy Western social-economic advancement, but have a strong aversion to the moral and ethical decay prevalent in our post Christian culture. We no longer have a unified vision or a unified voice of what we stand for and represent to the world. This complicates our mission with an ever increasing individualized Christian experience amid an increasingly non-denominational independent local church.
  2. Radical Islam – ask radicalized Muslims, “What is your vision of the future with regard to world culture?” If they are honest, it won’t be kinder, gentler, or tolerant. The Islamist dream is a Muslim World with all other cultures and faiths subservient to it. We desperately need a more moderate Islamic voice to rise up. In the era of Muslim greatness, there was great respect for the “people of the Book” meaning Jews and Christians, and some tolerance of other faiths as well.
  3. Self-destructive tendencies within the church – the organization has many critics and rightly so due to our very public examples of:
    - Moral and Ethical Failure – the church and its leaders have become corrupted by the world values. Our congregations have the same percentages of divorce, sexual and moral impurity, etc. as the prevailing culture. We are no longer acting as the salt and light Jesus intended. It is not that there are the “walking wounded” in the congregation because that is where they should be. However or clarity and uniformity of what it is the be “a Christian” meaning literally “Little Christ’s” is lost.
    - Our approach to evangelism locally is attractional and retentional... the emphasis is upon attending, but the guidance message on what we are becoming is lost.
    - Failure of unity - unnecessary divisions within the church rather than accepting some theological and differing traditions within the faith, with a focus on what we share in common... the same Spirit, the same Scripture, the same Hope.
- VII. Obstacles to Evangelism and Apologetics:**
- A. Internal Challenges to Apologetics & Evangelism – there are a number of inherent problems that need to be overcome through effective discourse and dialogue:**

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1. **The Problem of Bible Based Compassion – loving the person [sinner] and hating the sin. Our sin nature and our inherent spirit of rebellion need to be overcome... but we cannot do it on our own. Only God's indwelling Spirit can transform us from the inside out... by developing Jesus' nature in our inner-life. There is much misunderstanding on this topic, and relational involvement is a necessary bridge.**
  2. **The Problem of Bible Based Standards – how do we explain God's expectations of both truth and conduct standards that the world increasingly does not want to hear or follow?**
    - **Of Truth – There is such a thing as "Absolute Truth" that is hard wired into the fabric of the universe. Truth may be clarified and reinterpreted, but it cannot be dismissed and reinvented just to satisfy my own sensibilities.**
    - **Of Conduct – the Law of Moses [AKA Sinai Covenant] presents specific actions as right and others as wrong. The Old Covenant and the New Covenant support the consistency of these standards.**
  3. **The Problem of God's Righteousness and Goodness – and the existence of pain and suffering on Fallen earth. The ongoing problems resulting from our rebellion and the Fall continue until Jesus returns and brings about the redemption of corrupted creation.**
  4. **Fear of Rejection – people don't want to expose their less desirable or attractive nature, but they need to in order to shed their sin burden. God rejects the sin nature, but not the person. His plan – is a complete make-over... a new creation.**
  5. **Not my Ministry Gift – many believers don't think they have "the gift" of evangelism, but the Bible teaches clearly that all believers are ministers of the Gospel and witnesses of God's Grace (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 22:15). We need to find our voice in relevantly engaging others with the Gospel message so we can be the bridge to the lost.**
  6. **Knowing When to Evangelize – we need discernment as to when it is on task and appropriate to deliver the Gospel message. Too many feel it is our responsibility to win the argument and/or break down the door of resistance. The fear is that if we don't present the message now they may be lost. However, God's Grace is far broader than we realize. Our witness conveys God's desire to meet each individual and their own needs personally (Rev 3:8; 20). We don't need to win the argument, just make the introduction and engage in discipleship where we are invited to.**
  7. **Grace is not a "One-Size-Fits-All" Proposition – It is as distinctive as our personal DNA, Retina scan, or finger prints. Because God has revealed something specific to me, it doesn't mandate it necessarily as truth for all.**
- B. External Challenges to Apologetics and Evangelism – these need to be overcome through effective training and guidance:**
1. **Character & intellectual challenges of unbelievers and detractors. It is often difficult for believers to gain traction with non-believers because of known moral and ethical failures of prominent Christians. Also because of the simplicity of many of the faithful in contrast to the intellectual challenges of non-believers. Personal experience with God and what we know is hard to argue against.**
  2. **There is truth inherent in other systems that are often validated by personal experience. Truth is often portrayed as relative and positional, thus one must know their perspective to argue effectively.**

3. The Morality and compassionate nature of non-believers may exceed our personal moral character – but the goal of faith is not “become better people” but to become “children of God.” A Christian’s moral and ethical failures may be embarrassing and inexcusable, but our honest self-appraisal in light of God’s Grace is always attractational.
4. Christianity as an organized religion is very negative toward other religious systems and seen as judgmental and hypocritical. God is the One who is on display and not me, but my known failures often serve to discredit my witness.
5. Subjective nature of truths – facts and events are being rethought and rewritten through redemptive history. The point is not merely to make the concepts more saleable to each generation, but more applicable. The more prepared we are, the more effective our defense may be.

### C. Competing World Views and Christian Responses:

1. What is a worldview? What are the faith concept elements they are made of?
  - The anthropological term “Ethnocentricity” means we each have our own world view that we are convinced is right and true, and that others in our culture must understand our world view similarly. This is naive and largely untrue. Our individual world view has much to do with our family and life experiences. One who has had a loving and supportive family may presume all others have the same experience. One who has had an abusive and degrading family experience will find it difficult to trust and accept others vulnerably. Neither is necessarily “right or wrong” but each will determine what we expect relationally.
  - Our thoughts about reality and truth fall into broad categories:
    - i. “Assumptions” are those thoughts accepted as true without much serious contemplation or determinative support... we believe it because someone told us so or because we chose it over other options.
    - ii. “Presumptions” are those thoughts we have worked out fairly well and have significant discernment in support it as being true.
    - iii. There is always an objective and subjective side to such arguments and our defense must acknowledge both.
  - Pre & post-terrestrial life – how do we see life before birth and after death? Are souls eternal or transient? The Bible presents humanity as God’s crowning creative achievement, who He passionately loves and desires to live together forever in eternity. Secular humanism presents humanity as having won the evolutionary lottery who is at the top of the food chain... for now. The Biblical account holds that we are eternal spirit/physical beings, secular humanism holds that we are transitory physical beings... that some hold there may be a spiritual nature and others not.
  - What does it mean to be human? How does that differ from all other life? Do animals have souls?
  - Morality [ethics & mores] – explicit and implicit understanding of what constitutes right and wrong behavior. Are there moral absolutes? Or is behavior merely what the cultural law allows? If I know I’ve done something wrong but the law cannot prove it, does that mean I’m absolved?
  - How do we see others outside of our world views?

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### 2. Questions for Christians from different church traditions:

- Related to Christians, are we Western, Eastern, neither or both? Does it matter?
- Judaism, Christianity and Islam arose from the conflux at the intersection of East and West.
- The “Out of the Desert” notion applies to all three major religions.
- How does Christianity reform/redeem/reject culture and how does it differ from Judaism and Islam?

### D. Articulating a “Normative Christian World View” –

#### 1. Apologists have influenced our current Christian culture in a developmental way over time:

- First Tier – meaning strongly Biblical with Scriptural authority prominent in their thought development – Walter Martin, Paul Little, Francis Schaefer, P Schaff, CS Lewis, John Stott. In an era when the Bible was accepted as an authoritative standard, this worked well.
- Second Tier – meaning strongly Biblical but proved by investigative reasoning within our Christian culture. As science increasingly competed for the minds and hearts of humanity, the Bible was often relegated into a Spiritual only position. While the Bible is a Self-Disclosure of the Person and Nature of God... it is an introduction to God, not a manual of how the world works.
- Third Tier – meaning Biblical authoritative with Spiritual experiential and cross cultural reasoning – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ravi Zacharias, Peter Freeft. Bonhoeffer’s warning of the problem of “cheap grace” and Zacharias’ appeal to recapture a sense of “awe and wonder” in our Christian Spiritual life.
- Fourth Tier – meaning Christian cultural and Scriptural elements viewed in direct contrast to other worldly religions or points of view – Os Guinness, James Sire, William Craig. These great thinkers portray God as real and personal, and relational interaction with God is just as real and personal. Christianity is never more clearly seen or understood until it is set in direct comparison with the goals and objectives of other faiths. This is largely the role of Apologetics in our era.

#### 2. Apologists and Reformers who have influenced Christian thinkers through redemptive history:

- St. Thomas Aquinas
- St. Augustine
- Justin Martyr
- Irenaeus
- Martin Luther
- John Calvin
- Menno Simons

#### 3. Definitions:

- Apologetics – is a reasoned defense of the Christian faith amid the confrontation of a hostile worldly environment, and its use is to convey God’s truth in a compelling reasonable fashion to make it understandable and believable to others.
- Polemics – are doctrine and or dogma written in the form of criticism against common practices to direct others to what is right and true.
- Diachronic –is God’s progressive revelation of truth played out through Redemptive History.
  - i. God’s purpose has been purposefully revealed to people in history.

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- ii. Hope is presented consistently throughout history.
- Relationship of God’s Self-disclosure in Scripture, and ethical/moral Monotheism many churches proclaim as acceptable:
  - i. God transcends truth – though ethics and morality are defined in the revelation process, God is much more than what is right and wrong.
  - ii. God is beyond time and space, yet He is engaged with humanity who are in time and space.
  - iii. God is purposeful in His dealings and plans for humankind.
- Humanity – Scripture proclaims a very high standard of who we are, while secular humanism portrays a low animal standard.
  - i. Humanity is Created in God’s image – God is not physical so His image is metaphorical of His Spiritual nature. Jesus is the perfect reflection of God.
  - ii. Elements of God’s image:
    - 1. Person hood – God is presented as a complete and perfect Person who can be engaged and known. God is not merely some abstract concept; God is a Person to be experienced – Psalm 34:8.
    - 2. Masculine & Feminine – there are both masculine and feminine characteristics in the Trinity. Man and woman being “One” is a picture of the holistic unity within the Trinity, not merely in reference to our physical engagement.
  - iii. Attributes of God’s Nature – these links are reprised from page 4 of this article because they also speak to this issue:
    - 1. Who is God - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.1%20-%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Who%20is%20God.pdf>
    - 2. Jesus as God - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.2%20-%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Jesus'%20Mission%20of%20Redemption.pdf>
    - 3. Human Identity in God’s View... and what is spiritual warfare: <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.3%20-%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Spiritual%20Warfare.pdf>
  - iv. God and Humanity – God’s nature is Spiritual and eternal; Man’s nature is a physical being living out a spiritual nature within redemptive history. God is outside of time and space in an ever-present-now... with past-present-and future being relevant only for Humanity.
    - 1. We are in a particular position in time and space... we could not exist without a physical reality.
    - 2. We have both spiritual and physical needs.
    - 3. We exist at the pleasure of our Creator.

VIII. Apologetics – The purpose of apologetics is to present a reasonable theological defense of God. It is helpful to understand the Development of Theological & Philosophical Thought from Deism to Existentialism in the Age of Enlightenment as this lays the foundation for the journey of Post-Christian

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Western Thought. Here is a brief outline of salient philosophical and theological thought developments as they involved Western Culture and social consciousness, and impacted the Church:

**A. 1700's – Deism develops:**

1. Deism is still with us in our culture... many who call themselves "Agnostic" are actually Deists.
2. A few characteristics of deism are:
  - God is seen as the "Divine Watch Maker" who creates the great clock of the universe and sets it in motion.
  - God created and then moved on to let creation run.
  - Jesus is arguably the greatest man of all time, but is not God.
3. Unitarianism theology is the closest survivor to deism in the realm of organized religion.

**B. 1850's – Naturalism develops:**

1. Naturalism may or may not have a God defined or attributed... as in one sense it is the result of "natural process" apart from a deity.
2. The "Laws of Nature" rule the universe, and are discoverable by humanity.
3. Taoism is an example of a "Nature Religion" – its examples of ethics and behavior reflect the harmony of nature, and play out in:
  - Wu-Wei meaning "action through non-action" including – naturalness, simplicity, and spontaneity.
  - The Three Treasures including – compassion, moderation, and humility.
4. Emergence Theory – how things came about can be investigated through scientific inquiry, thus we are not dependent on a revelation from God... we can discover and interpret truth on our own.
5. Darwinism – was developed as a "scientific process" of natural selection to explain divergent animal evolution in a closed environmental system, but subsequently it took on the stature of indisputable scientific law.
6. A Closed Universe - the continued expansion of and the eventual destruction of the universe is an ongoing process that is already underway, and will result in the recreation of a new universe.
7. Humankind can have an influence and even change their own destiny in a limited temporal fashion. However, ultimately the Natural Processes come inevitably to a climatic apocalyptic conclusion.

**C. 1860's – Marxist Philosophy develops:**

1. The material world including the natural world and their social-economic conditions mean everything for humanity.
2. We have the capacity and capability of developing an ideal society.
3. Sweden is a modern example of a Marxist influenced society... and France of a Socialist influenced society.
4. Utopia is expressed as a Teleological Benevolent Society is possible to obtain.

**D. 1870's – Existentialism as a Philosophical development:**

1. This is the 'Dark Side' of Naturalism... where naturalism has a hopeful nature, existentialism has a pessimistic one.
2. Nothing exists but the here and now and what I make it.
3. Nothing may be preferable to personal existing in the context of pain or suffering.
4. Existentialist see the world and the society as existing for their benefit... what is good or bad is defined by the state and the individual. Right and wrong are constructs of the imagination.

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- E. 1890's – Nietzsche develops an anti-Christian segment of Existentialism:**
1. He wanted to transcend the mass stupidity of the Western mind.
  2. He proclaimed “God is dead” that we purposefully killed him... because he is only a construct of our mind; he does not exist beyond it.
  3. The naturalist and evolutionist mindset are the most compelling views of creation.
  4. Humanity looks at the void that is life and then we create our own reality.
  5. Kierkegaard develops a Christian expression of Existentialism... that looks at the void of worldly existentialism and takes instead a leap of faith into Christ.
- F. 1950's – Camus and Sartre:**
1. World War 1 failed to make the world safe for democracy... contrary to what was promised by democratic capitalism.
  2. The absurd social void of the flappers and the anti-liquor laws, the Quixotic stock market, and the destruction of the dust bowl of the 1930's all created social frustration and discontent.
  3. In such an environment a more “atheistic” form of existentialism developed.
- G. 1960's – Nihilism**
1. This is truly the ‘Dark Side’ of existentialism... death is actually release from the non-sensical pain and suffering of an arbitrary human existence.
  2. Nihilist thought revels in the paradox of life and death.
  3. Anarchism is a part of the process.
  4. There is no meaning and no order – only what we create.
  5. Hopelessness and despair are embraced.
  6. Nihilism has led to Social & Moral decay – along with the breakdown of modern social norms, there are new atrocities adopted as the “new normal” of humanist society:
    - Abortion – because life and death are absurd, it is just as well if you could have dispensed with it. It is better for the convenience of the mother than respecting the life of a child.
    - Divorce – since personal fulfillment is relative, children are left wondering about their self-worth... many conclude “I’m not worth my parents staying together for.” Parental selfishness is more important. Parents are seen as conscious-less.
    - Narcissism – can’t tear yourself away from yourself. Only you matter... it is the culture of me.
    - Euthanasia – since there is no meaning to life and no sanctity for it, it is better to be comfortable and useful on your own terms. When you can no longer effectively do that, death is a desirable solution.
- H. Eastern Metaphysics and Pantheistic Unity – where all is one:**
1. Each soul is a god in nature; everything is a part of god as each is a part of this higher consciousness.
  2. The goal is to transcend the material world... to escape the absurdity of the cyclical birth-death cycle and to merge finally mercifully into the cosmic god. This is the eradication of the self-identity and the merging into a cosmic identity where I no longer exist.
  3. Matter and spirit is the duality – it is our reality in tension.
  4. The process is to rise out of the material world and live above it through illumination – a combination of knowledge, discipline and ascetics... ultimately resulting in self-renunciation and self-dissolution.

5. The appeal of Eastern Metaphysics was tempered by the harsh reality of the Hindu Caste system:
- Caste system developed 4,000 years ago when the Aryans conquered the Indus Valley and the highly cultured people living there who wouldn't be enslaved.
  - Brahmans – are the priests and scholars – who were to establish and preserve the ideals of the nation.
  - Kshatriyas – are the rulers & the warrior class
  - Vaisyas – are the artisans & merchants
  - Sudras – are the unskilled workers
  - Pariahs – are the outcasts and 'untouchables'
  - Chandalas – are the serious criminals that primarily rose out of the Pariahs.
  - Karma – is the good or bad energy a person developed in living out their life and developed within Samsara – or the Cycle of rebirth.
  - The soul is immortal and bound to repeated cycles of life-death-rebirth as the soul is being purified so it may return into the cosmic consciousness.
  - Eastern thought is dominated by circular thinking while the West is linear.
- I. Buddhism:
1. Developed out of Hinduism and in response to the harsh reality of the rigid caste system.
  2. Buddhism taught the universal brotherhood of love, and the acceptance of all people.
  3. Goal is the cessation of the self and merging into the oneness of the godhead. Totally different from Christianity which calls for the giving up of our own rights to ourselves and submitting to God. In Buddhism the individual loses their self where in Christianity they save it.
  4. Desire is the root of all pain – similar to Epicureanism that taught that a simple, temperate life of moderation was the route to happiness. This also held that people were chance combinations of atoms that dispersed at death which brings a cessation of pain and suffering.
  5. Ataraxia – 'inner peace' through freedom from all desire... essentially becoming numb.
  6. Buddha is not a personal god, he was a human who found a way to transcend the illusion of this world and helped others become enlightened through his teachings and training. This is totally different from Christianity where God is personal and indispensable, and every individual of great value to God.
- J. 1980's – "The Ecumenical Movement" – evolved out of the Roman Catholic Church and gained traction and influenced a more inclusive view of the major world religions. The Christian liberal approach to this movement held that all faiths had a divine spark of truth in them. For many, this was interpreted that there were "many paths up the mountain" that deserved respect and consideration. As a result of this thought development:
1. Comparative religion was now taught in colleges. As a result many young people were exposed to a wide variety of faith practices primarily from an academic standpoint.
  2. The more conservative denominations treated this as an attack of the heresy of syncretism on the church. Christianity divided more consciously into fundamentalism/conservatism and progressivism/liberalism camps.
  3. Progressive camps began borrowing elements from other religious traditions to be more relevant to the emerging cultures.
  4. The fundamentalist camps began closing themselves off from the world become enclave communities in a hostile social environment.

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### K. Secular Humanism developed as Religious Humanism:

1. The original Humanist Manifesto #1 was written in 1933, the Humanist Manifesto # 2 was written in 1973, and the Humanist Manifesto #3 was written in 2003.
2. The central theme of all three manifestos is the elaboration of a philosophical value system which does not necessarily include belief in any personal deity or "higher power."
3. Each version had been launched by various prominent members of academia who objected to the non-sense notion of a creator God. So in essence they made humanity their god... and the promotion and development of humanity their ultimate goal.

### L. New Age – Post Modernism:

1. The New Age movement is described by Wikipedia as “a Western spiritual movement that developed in the second half of the 20th century. Its central precepts have been described as ‘drawing on both Eastern and Western spiritual and metaphysical traditions and infusing them with influences from self-help and motivational psychology, holistic health, parapsychology, consciousness research, and quantum physics.’ The term ‘New Age’ refers to the coming astrological Age of Aquarius. The movement aims to create ‘a spirituality without borders or confining dogmas’ that is inclusive and pluralistic.”
2. The Result of the development of this “New Age-Post Modernism” is an “Amalgamation of religion” – the confusion reaped from syncretism:
  - The Focus is on personal ‘becoming’ – it’s all about your growth and pilgrimage.
  - Self-actualization – you have control and responsibility on who you become. It is not about discovering the significance God had in mind in creating you; it is more about who do you want to be? It is rebellion in sheep’s clothes.
  - The “Spiritual Realm” is not just real, but something you can employ to be tapped into and utilized for your own purposes.
  - Cosmic consciousness with which we can meld and use – as in Star Wars ‘The Force’ – an impersonal amalgamation of cosmic force that you can employ... for good or for evil, your choice.
  - Old fashioned religions are seen as an impediment to the advancing of the New Age consciousness. New age is not tolerant of other faiths – it is inherently intolerant as there is nothing sacred about a human being who is not evolving. If you are holding on to old traditions you are essentially no better than an animal.
  - The “Occult” of Neo-Paganism becomes en-vogue – this involves animism, witchcraft, shamanism, occultism, etc. It promises a pragmatic method for individuals to shape and control their environment.
  - The prevalent belief is that there is no ultimate reality – and there is no ultimate truth. It is all relative based on the individual. However there are many things true that can be utilized for one’s advantage in their own personal evolutionary quest. Bottom line – “It’s all good... it’s all about you.”
3. Elements feeding the postmodern surge:
  - 1960’s – existentialism & Marxism gave rise to a humanistic idealism and counter cultural phenomena – with the call to ‘Subvert the dominant paradigm’
  - 1970’s – The ‘Me-ism’ and “I-can do it” ideology of the 60’s has now degraded into myopic, hedonistic, self-absorption.
  - 1980’s – Occultism becomes en-vogue.

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- 1990's – Eastern unity in media and celebrities is accepted as normal and cool.
  - 2000's – Post Christian thinking in full flower.
  - Deconstructionism – promotes that we don't accept thinkers or authors at face value. Rather, understand their agenda and use it to deconstruct the text and discover what really went on.
    - i. There is no meaning in the event; only in the agenda the author is pushing.
    - ii. We construct our own meaning in how we interpret and apply our understanding – there is no event, and no history... just our stories about them.
    - iii. This is true of history, it is true about Scripture, and all other written sources.
4. **Development of a Community Consciousness** – where values, purpose and meaning are created in your individual community identity. This is great within a Christian discipleship community who all have a consistent standard and value structure based upon the Person of Jesus... but horrible in contemporary culture where anything goes. The latter results in:
- Deep longing for spiritual experiences without an objective truth basis.
  - Reconstructing a 'new' value system from the self-absorbed baby boomer & yuppie generation.
  - A new generation that is devoid of objective thought, and that is hungry for a cause – similar to Germany in the 1930's. This could go either way... into a new expression of democracy, or of fascism.
  - Deconstructionism has led to a lack of historical perspective – we are now more open to make the same mistakes.
  - Post family mindset – the outreach to a peer community for acceptance and values has no generational ties.
- M. **Islam** – Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in our present era... which is remarkable given the severely restrictive nature of the faith. Muslim leaders dictate and interpret the word and will of Allah, with complete authority over their mostly illiterate followers. Followers are told what to do by their leaders, and these followers seem determined to thoughtlessly carryout these orders without question.
1. Islam is one of three major forces competing for global domination. The other two are Global Secularism [new humanist European Community is a harbinger of this], and the Christian Kingdom of God.
  2. Muslims think in terms of a theocracy where God is King over their life and society – their imams and mullahs are God's human authority on earth, and faith penetrates everything they do.
  3. Because Islam is a Theocracy – they tend to have a long memory of historical events... they live in the past and past events remain "immanent" in their cultural mindset. For example, the Crusades and Western Imperial Colonization in their thought comprise recent events that they don't want to reoccur.
  4. Americans in particular and the West in general tend to have a very short-term memory. We tend to live in the present and sort of ignore the past.
  5. American and Western faith is also not characterized by blind obedience, as we are encouraged to study and make up our own mind about how to live our life. Muslim faith on the other hand is for the most part accepted as imparted by Muslim scholars and elders. The emphasis is on conformance not transformation.

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### **N. Counter-Cultural Church – is characterized by a number of factors:**

- 1. The Church is ‘Trans-national’ in nature, ‘Transformative’ in purpose, and the Kingdom of God is eternal and beyond any national identity.**
- 2. Emphasis is on community where the good of the whole is valued over individual gain or loss is a function of Kingdom mindedness.**
- 3. A completely Pro-Life ethic represents a church community that is beyond individual rights... thus an abortion is an obscenity against God. The statement of the Sanctity of Life is to validate the importance to God of all human life – not just the privileged. This is a very egalitarian conceptualization of human reality.**
- 4. Intentional about welcoming everybody to partake with us in the Kingdom – deliberately reaching out to all especially to the disenfranchised. This concept is demonstrated clearly in the Parable of the Wedding Party (Matt 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24) when people along the road were invited to partake of the Kingdom of God.**
- 5. Deliberately engaged in social justice and acts of mercy to meet the physical as well as spiritual needs of the people, it focuses on doing all we can do with respecting the sanctity of life to usher in the Kingdom of God.**

### **IX. Key Concepts for Evangelism Amid an Increasingly Confused Christian World View:**

#### **A. The need to Stress Personal initiative and reliance on the Spirit:**

- 1. Need to make a commitment to being both real [authentic] and vulnerable [engageable] in dialog.**
- 2. New believers need to have the opportunity to share their encounter with God and the Truth of their experience & personal transformation. The argument of an individual life transformed is far greater than the best or most developed logic.**
- 3. Mature believers need to share their worldview and their personal situation.**
- 4. It is God who convicts, restores, and reconciles people – we only testify to our experience and the revealed truth we know [our witness].**
- 5. Prayerfully approach others asking God for wisdom, insight, discernment, and the power of His Spirit in speaking through us.**
- 6. If we can talk someone into the Kingdom, someone else can talk them out of it... it isn’t our job to do that, though we are expected to make an adequate defense of our faith.**

#### **B. Focus on the Incarnation of Jesus, and the Gospel message of His Cross & Resurrection:**

- 1. The only counterpoint to evil is the cross... and Jesus displays the Goodness and Love of God perfectly in taking the matter of solving humanities problem of sin nature at His own expense.**
- 2. Truth of incarnation & resurrection – historical events cross-referenced by other historians make this more believable... not to mention a million Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians who having observed the truth of the incarnation, cross and resurrection preferred to accept death in the most horrific of expressions rather than renounce their faith.**
- 3. Paul makes this point clearly in Romans 5:7-8 – “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

#### **C. The Church as a Radical Community of Love:**

- 1. How are we different from the world in terms of:**

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- **CRISIS** – people see the reality of someone in how they deal with and/or respond to moments of crisis. We are either at our best or worst in such situations... but we're always real.
  - **PRAXIS** – the synthesis of theory and practice without presuming the primacy of either.
  - **Affection** – what do we display in community? Do we resemble a family of friends and relatives gladly meeting and engaging with one another, or a group of strangers who can't wait to get on with the remainder of their day? The dynamic of a community of love and affection is attractational.
  - **Discipline** – are we submitted to one another out of love and respect, or is our self-interest more in display? The former is attractational... it is a demonstration of being part of something that is way bigger than me.
  - **Expectations of Christian behavior** – it is good to have a clear view of what Christian character and behavior looks like and then display it without judgment or fanfare... just because it is who we are and desire to be.
  - **Ethics** – we all are engaged in different spheres in our life... at home, at work, with friends, in church, etc. Are we chameleons... who change to suit the environment, or are we more consistently portraying a life expressing Christian ethics and values? Who are you REALLY when no one else is looking? Being real and consistent is attractational.
- 2. God called us to be a people different from the world... we see the falseness of image conscious celebrities especially when they behave badly. Christians are not perfect yet, but we should demonstrate character that is other than what the world values.**
- We are called to Holiness and accountability within a Godly Ideal.
  - Discipleship is inherently rational and relational... and it is holistic identity involving the mind [IQ] and the heart [EQ] as well as our actions [mission].
  - How we deal with our failures say more to the world than our successes.
  - Church should be shown more as a \* MASH \* unit – we are all the walking wounded living out our lives in a broken and imperfect world. Woundedness is a major part of being human... acceptance and healing is a major part of the churches response to the human condition.
- 3. Church & believers should demonstrate a willingness to dialog and mature by being open to change without denying or denigrating our faith – Luke 9:56-62**
- Faith intrinsically links promise & fulfillment.
  - Church and believers are imperfect vehicles of a perfect Love and Hope.
  - Realization that there is a cost associated in professing our faith... our strengths and failures will be open for people to observe and criticize.
  - Hell is the last refuge and final resting place of rebellious free will. Disciplined free will is what will be celebrated in Heaven.
  - Ask others what we can pray about for them – then do it.
- 4. The Church should have Community Relevance**
- Greet and meet encounters... the community needs to see Christians as real and engaged, otherwise they fall back into an unflattering stereo-type.
  - Integration not assimilation – church is not 'The Borg' intent on absorbing people or the community; we need to demonstrate we are a part of it.

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- Are people actually thought of and prayed for after the meeting in the venue? Are there strategies at play to integrate the faith communities outside the venue?
  - Intercession is huge... so many people are hurting; so many people need and want prayer. It is a mystical healing experience to be prayed over, and we should make more opportunities for it.
5. **Jesus is the Wisdom and the Power of God**
- Most Christians know that God loves when His people pray... for each other and for their community and world. Do we have the faith to pray for demonstrations of power? Do we come to God with confidence that we'll be heard, and that God will work out the best possible outcomes?
  - Do we have the faith to put our own personal transformation on display?
- D. **New ways of 'Witnessing' – in expressing an Evangelical outreach relevant for today**
1. **Need a 'Charismatic Leader' who can provide a vision for others to engage in:**
    - What are you dreaming about? – Both for yourself and the Church?
    - Who shares your dream? – do you have the courage to put it on display and invite others into it?
    - What is the scriptural basis of your dream? Have you worked out your faith expressions and hopes based on clear Scriptural imperatives?
  2. **Need a clear focus of your own 'Mission'- my Mission target includes:**
    - Inciting 'thoughtful people'
    - Being & reproducing 'intentional followers of Christ'
    - How we do this is specific to our own church and context, and then multiply it in others?
  3. **Evangelism Values include:**
    - Integrity – Christlike and consistently expressed.
    - Relational engagement – real and personal.
    - Dialogue – talking with all who will engage to promote understanding rather than winning a debate.
    - Ethics – Christian leaders need to demonstrate an understanding that people are not the means to my ministry ends; instead, I am the means to God's ministry end in meeting people's most personal and desperate needs.
    - Common values need to be developed and shared with your outreach group... one vision, a shared goal, a common focus.
  4. **Strategies Involve:**
    - Interface with other church groups in my community as well as community groups [Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.], and mission groups [food pantries, homeless missions, etc.].
    - How can we demonstrate God's love in our social context – discover opportunities and develop strategies to engage the needs.
    - When I live for the Glory of God and the Good of Others – I grow... When I focus on myself – I diminish. When I grow... those I'm engaged with grow.
    - What kind of fish are you fishing for? Don't expect them to jump into your boat; you need to use the proper bait to attract them... and to choose the right bait, you need to know them well.
  5. **Develop Specific Goals – Modern strategic thinking calls for:**
    - Measurable goals – be specific on what you expect to achieve.

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- **Qualitative goals – focus first and foremost on personal growth and development. If this is happening, people will get involved. If it's not happening, they will go somewhere else.**
  - **Quantitative goals – we need quantitative goals so we know how to adequately prepare for those God brings to us... never forget it is the Spirit's work to bring people and convict them – Acts 2:39-41 – The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**
  - **Goals are targets for group motivation – if you don't have a target, inevitably you'll never hit it.**
  - **Dream big... anyone can dream little. Have realistic expectations grounded in a grander plan.**
  - **Go out and do it... expect God to go before you and lead you into His mission field... but the Great Commission requires us to Go [evangelism] and teach [discipleship]. This is the key to effective ministry.**
- 6. Develop Effective Plans and Programs:**
- **These are the last things to consider after you have worked through all of the foregoing, only then do you really know your mission field and how to respond to it.**
  - **There are specific works and methods of implementing and achieving your vision and goals... but it invariably involves God first and other leaders second.**
  - **These can and should change with practice presuming the vision and goals endure.**
- 7. Assessment is Critical:**
- **The value of having a clear vision and specific goals is they force you to align your plans and your methods – it is like utilizing a scope on a high-powered rifle rather than a short-barreled shotgun. They both have their uses, but only one will hit a long range target.**
  - **Plans and methods need to be periodically evaluated for their success and appropriateness:**
    - i. **Critical Review – critical thinking is the result of a disciplines mind, critical responses are the result of a heart that needs tending to.**
    - ii. **Feedback – encourage it and respond positively to it.**
    - iii. **Reconfigure – don't fall in love with your plan or method... be open to change.**
    - iv. **Re-implement – if it doesn't work out as hoped for, do something different. The best definition of insanity is doing the same thing the same way in the same circumstances and expecting a different outcome.**
- 8. The work of Evangelism is complete when new believers are:**
- **Sustaining themselves – involved in being disciplined and discipling each other.**
  - **Re-producing themselves – evangelizing in the community.**
  - **Releasing more ministry responsibility to lay staff – and provide more equipping and training for ministry. Prepare your Mission staff to:**
    - i. **Get their hands dirty – working with people especially in the triage center that is the Church is going to get messy.**
    - ii. **Be prepared to change diapers – there are so many baby Christians out there who have never been disciplined.**
    - iii. **Remember that Christlike Leadership is Servant hood.**

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- iv. Remember that we believe in and are committed to the ‘Universality of Christ’ not the ‘universality of religion’.