

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS OF PERSONAL FINANCE

Session 1. Foundations

Disclaimer

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Justification

Christian apologetics simply seeks to produce reasons for believing Christianity and addresses challenges to one's belief in Christianity. Christian apologetics needs to address economics and more specifically personal finance.

Cafferky notes, “(I)f trained apologists are not trained in handling economic issues, then Christians trained in economics and business have a responsibility to dialogue with them, and even collaborate with them, to place economics as an important context for the work of an apologist.”

Michael Cafferky, “Apologetics Without Apology: Developing Arguments for the Existence of God from Business and Economics,” *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, 22 (1) Fall 2019, 45-56 (p. 54).

Session opening quote

“The real trouble with this world of ours is not that it is an unreasonable world, nor even that it is a reasonable one. The commonest kind of trouble is that it is nearly reasonable, but not quite. Life is not an illogicality; yet it is a trap for logicians. It looks just a little more mathematical and regular than it is; its exactitude is obvious, but its inexactitude is hidden; its wildness lies in wait.”¹

¹G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Chapter 6 “The Paradoxes of Christianity,” 1908, p. 148.

Facilitator introduction

- Over 35 years teaching and research in finance
- Improved financial decision-making is key to human flourishing
- A worldview is analogous to eyeglasses
- Goal: Provide reasons for the truthfulness of the Christian worldview
- Material here is my compilation of other's work

Session overview

- Personal finance rests on philosophical foundations
- Christian apologetics is defined, purpose and origins explored, and approaches introduced
- Selected Christian financial management concepts presented
- Overall course reviewed

“Financial fruit depends on your philosophical roots.”

Key passages

- Followers: **1 Peter 3:15** Evidence favoring Jesus' claims found in personal finance
- Seekers: **Philippians 1:7, 16** Followers seek to defend truthfulness of Jesus
- **Acts 26:1-32** Please consider patiently (v. 3) and consider whether what I say is true and rational (v. 25)

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense (ἀπολογία) to anyone who asks you for a reason (λόγον) for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Philippians 1:7, 16 ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ... ¹⁶The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

Acts 26:1-32 ¹So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: ²“I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴“My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. ⁶And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made

by God to our fathers, ⁷to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

⁹“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹²“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³At midday,

O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive

forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” ²⁵But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” ²⁹And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

³⁰Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. ³¹And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Home purchase illustration

Is the home purchase decision simply an analytical and rational choice or is there more that typically goes into it?



Christian apologetics defined

3-4-5 in the Worldview Academy

Worldviews face three tests for truth, four questions to be answered, and five subjects to be understood:

Three tests for truth

- 1) Is the claim logically consistent?
- 2) Is the claim empirically adequate?
- 3) Is the claim experientially relevant?

Four questions to be answered

- 1) Origins: Where did we come from?
- 2) Meaning: Is life meaningful?
- 3) Morality: Are there immutable moral laws?
- 4) Destiny: Where am I going?

Five subjects to be understood

- 1) God – theology
- 2) Reality – metaphysics
- 3) Knowledge – epistemology
- 4) Morality – ethics
- 5) Humankind – anthropology

- No worldview is exempt
- One's worldview makes a difference in how we feel, think, and act
- We can change our worldview

Christian apologetics

- simply seeks to produce reasons for believing and addresses challenges to one's belief

“The task of developing and sharing arguments for the truth and rationality of Christianity and the falsehood and irrationality of alternatives with the aim of strengthening the faith of believers and provoking non-believers to consider Christ.”²

²Paul Coulter, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, <https://www.bethinking.org/apologetics/an-introduction-to-christian-apologetics>.

- “... knowing what we believe and why we believe it, and being able to communicate that to others effectively.”³
- “Apologetics is the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”⁴

³Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Expository Apologetics*, 2015, p. 20.

⁴See Baucham, p. 21.

Apologetics

- The language of the New Testament is Koine (common) Greek
- The Greek word apologia (ἀπολογία) from which we get our word apologetics carries the meaning of making a legal defense or a carefully reasoned defense of one's beliefs or actions.⁵
- It is important to note that Christians were expected to be able to provide a carefully reasoned explanation for following Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter puts it this way.⁶

⁵See Coulter.

⁶All scripture is taken from the *English Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense (ἀπολογία) to anyone who asks you for a reason (λόγον) for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

- Be ready to give a defense of the Christian faith
- Well-reasoned or rational (λόγον – words, reason)
- Provide evidence or arguments that provide rational justification for their Christian belief.

Purpose of apologetics

Objectives for apologetics

- Draw seekers to faith in Jesus Christ
- Strengthen the faith of Jesus Christ's followers
- Different approaches at times
 - In-family arguments, such as biblically-based perspectives
 - Out-of-family arguments, such as empirical evidence and rational persuasion.

Origins of apologetics⁷

- Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 AD) well versed in numerous philosophies
- Apologist have been criticized
 - Tertullian (c. 155-240 AD) argued that various philosophies and Christianity are incompatible
 - “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”
- Luke documented several apologetic arguments made by Paul in Acts.

⁷See Coulter.

- Paul used rational arguments to support Christianity
 - Fulfilling the Old Testament
 - Demonstrate Christianity was better than pagan philosophical ideas

Acts 17:17-21; Acts 26:1-32; Philippians 1:7, 16

- Paul defended the Christian perspective
 - Context of the Old Testament (**Acts 17:17-21**)
 - A philosophical perspective within the marketplace (**Acts 26:1-32**)
 - Paul also speaks from his own personal experience
 - Paul often served in the role of an apologist (**Philippians 1:7, 16**)

Approaches to apologetics

- Key task of a Christian apologist is to serve as an ambassador for Jesus Christ
- Defense (negative apologetics)
 - Defend Christianity in a winsome way
 - Address misconceptions
 - What it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ
 - Proper interpretation of the Bible
 - Interpreting various scientific claims
 - Refuting historical and archeological assertions.
 - Seek to defend Christianity against various charges in a logical way without being offensive

- Offense (positive apologetics)
 - Produce reasons to believe the Christian faith
 - Seeks to demonstrate the rationality of Christianity
 - Evidence for the existence of God
 - Evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - Address differing explanations for what happened to Peter after Jesus' crucifixion
 - Exalt Christianity in a logical way without being offensive

Financial management

- A subfield of microeconomics within the broad field of economics
- Economics is a subfield of the social sciences
- Social sciences are a subfield of science itself
- Intentionally intersect Christian apologetics with finance
 - Not the word of faith movement (health and wealth gospel, prosperity gospel, or the name it and claim it gospel)
 - This movement in various forms asserts that it is always God's will to be healthy and wealthy
 - Based on clear biblical teaching as well as casual empirical observation, this movement's claims are simply false

- The existence of counterfeits is often an indication of something valuable
- The true gospel of Jesus Christ has had numerous counterfeits over the centuries
- Demonstrate the truthfulness of the Christian worldview
- Not to give you ten tips on how to die rich
- The decision to follow Jesus Christ will result in suffering
- As stewards of God's resources money is a great servant but a horrible master
- Christian worldview has a completely different perspective on wealth management. This Christian perspective is either true or false. So let us investigate.

Christian financial management

- Owner or manager
- Money the ultimate goal or useful as a servant
- Enhancing self-control through saving (delayed gratification)
- Not only do ideas have consequences, but ideas also have antecedents
- Goal to provide a robust philosophical foundation to the Christian-based finance approach

Target audience

- Not the evangelical atheist and others deeply committed to the expulsion of Christianity from the marketplace of ideas
- Includes two categories
 - Maturing believers
 - Genuine seekers.

- Seek common ground
 - Identify foundational beliefs that most people share
 - All human knowledge rests on many things that we accept by faith
 - We presuppose
 - We believe the law of non-contradiction
 - Two mutually exclusive propositions cannot both be true at the same time in the same sense
 - Christianity and any one of numerous other perspectives cannot both be true
 - Disingenuous to make assertions such as truth depending on whether you believe it or not
 - Truth is objective in nature.

- Quality Christian apologetic approaches assert various truth claims
- Jesus' approach to seekers was genuine as well as gentle

Where do we go from here?

Chapter/Date	Topic
1 5/16	Foundations
2 5/23	Philosophy: Logic and epistemology
3 5/30	Philosophy: Metaphysics and ethics
4 6/6	Nature of information
5 6/13	Existence of God
6 6/20	Competing worldviews
7 6/27	Naturalism, Christianity, and Science

8 7/4	Problem of suffering
9 7/11	The Bible as hearsay or heresy
10 7/18	The Bible as history
11 7/25*	Miracles
12 8/1*	The grand miracle: The resurrection of Jesus Christ
13 8/8	Loving your neighbor and apologetics

Ch	Christianity	Naturalism
1	Manager of God's resources	Owner of my resources
2	Intricate design and order	Chaos
3	Immutable ethics	Mutable and tentative social arrangements
4	Objective reality	Subjective perceptions, never sure real
5	Beauty	Preference
6	Particularism—know particular claims	Skepticism—somehow sure no absolutes
7	Economic abundance	Dwindling scarcity

8	Meaningful life	Meaninglessness of all of life
9	Transcendent reality pervades everything	Existence is all that exists and that is it
10	Truth is known with certainty	Truth is not knowable
11	Divine declared communication	Divine silence
12	Deep and abiding hope in life	Hopelessness
13	Loved deeply by God and others	At best tolerated by others

Summary

- Goal is to spark discussion
- We introduced Christian apologetics and provide a roadmap on where we will be going over the next several sessions
- Christian apologetics was defined and its purpose and origins explored
- Both negative and positive approaches to Christian apologetics was introduced
- Finally, the target audience was identified
- An overview of the thirteen sessions provided

Foundations of Personal Finance

Robert E. Brooks

May 10, 2021



Foundations of Personal Finance: A Christian Perspective is a thirteen week study series exploring the foundations of personal finance from a Christian perspective. The following PDF file is a ROUGH draft of this entire series.

[Foundations of Personal Finance \(May 2021\)](#)

A podcast that covers some of the ethical issues addressed in this study can be found at:

[Aaron Beam Speaks Podcast: Episode 31 \(9/12/20\)](#)

(Be sure to scroll down to Episode 31.)

Session 1: Foundations

[Video](#) [Presentation](#) [Presentation Handout](#)

Session 2: Philosophy: Logic and epistemology

[Video](#) [Presentation](#) [Presentation Handout](#)

Questions?

Case Study #1:

Bill and Melinda, a young married couple, recently decided to take the plunge and buy a house. They were excited to learn that the friendly banker would make them a sizeable mortgage with no money down. They seek your advice regarding the biblical perspective on this decision.

Case Study #2:

Your atheist friend claims that the Christian faith is a blind leap and perhaps useful for those who are afraid. Science however is based on rationality and thus a leisurely justifiable walk and deeply useful for those willing to brave the chaos of life.

Case Study #3:

“Christianity may be beneficial by providing an ethical framework for living, but it does not aid in managing your money.” Appraise.

Your feedback will help improve this material.

Robert Brooks

(205) 799-9927

www.robertebrooks.org

rbrooks@frmhelp.com

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