Evidential Apologetics

by[Matt Slick](https://carm.org/matt-slick)  
6/8/2007

Evidential [Apologetics](https://carm.org/dictionary-apologetics) is that style of Christian defense that stresses the miracles found in the Bible particularly Christ's resurrection as an evidence for the existence of God and the validity of [Christ](https://carm.org/dictionary-christ)and His words.  It also uses historical evidences to support the veracity of the biblical account(s).  In this, it is very similar to [Classical Apologetics](https://carm.org/classical-apologetics), which stresses reason in its approach to evidences.  But, it's focus is on evidence where classical apologetics' focus is on reason.  Again, evidential apologetics stresses evidence such as miracles, fulfilled prophecies, etc., and uses reason to support them.

An example of evidential apologetics might be as follows (note the similar argument to the classical approach):

**Allen**:  How do I know God exists?  
**Paul**: One of the ways can be found in the gospel accounts where [Jesus](https://carm.org/dictionary-jesus) performed many miracles like walking on water, healing the sick, etc., and then finally rising from the dead.  No mere man can do those kinds of things.  There had to be something supernatural at work.  Why can't that be God?  
**Allen**:  But the Bible is full of myths.  It is just a bunch of stories.  
**Paul**:  Actually, they are not just myths and stories.  The gospels, for example, were written by those who either knew Jesus personally or were under the direction of those who did.  The gospels are full of factual accounts of cities, customs, terms, locations, etc., that can all be verified historically and archaeologically.  There are many books that have verified the authenticity of the gospel accounts.  
**Allen**:  If that is true, then I am sure the gospels have been corrupted over time.  
**Paul**:  Actually, that isn't quite accurate.   You see, the New Testament alone has something like 24,000 supporting biblical manuscripts, and they are around 99.5% textually pure.  That means that they have been reliably transmitted to us through the centuries.  We can trust them.  
**Allen**:  Still, I can't believe all those miracles and stuff.  
**Paul**:  Why not?  Many eyewitnesses wrote and spoke about what they saw Jesus do.  After the gospel accounts were written, there were plenty of people around who had seen Jesus, who could have spoken up or written something down contradicting what the apostles wrote.  But we have no account of this happening.  
**Allen**:  I didn't think of that.  
**Paul**:  Furthermore, the eyewitnesses wrote about what they saw; and they saw miracles as did hundreds of others. Jesus healed people, walked on water, calmed a storm by a command, and rose from the dead; therefore, whatever He says must be true since He backed up His words with His deeds.  
**Allen**:  That makes sense, but that doesn't mean there is a God.  
**Paul**:  True, it doesn't require that a God exist; but since Jesus spoke about God, about the need to be right with God, etc., and since He performed many miracles, including rising from the dead, then it is safe to say that not only is there a God but also that we should listen to Jesus.  This would also mean that the [Bible](https://carm.org/dictionary-bible)is the inspired word of God.  
**Allen**:  I'll have to think about what you said.

Generally, evidential apologetics stresses data that supports the miraculous evidences of the biblical accounts, thereby authenticating the Bible and the claims and deeds of Jesus.

Adherents to this position have been B. B. Warfield, John Warwick Montgomery, Clark Pinnock, etc.

Presuppositional Apologetics

by[Matt Slick](https://carm.org/matt-slick)  
6/9/07

This form of Christian [apologetics](https://carm.org/dictionary-apologetics) deals with presuppositions. A presupposition is an assumption that is taken for granted. A [Christian](https://carm.org/dictionary-christian)presuppositionalist presupposes God's existence and argues from that perspective to show the validity of Christian theism.[1](https://carm.org/presuppositional-apologetics#footnote1_je04pfg)This position also presupposes the truth of the Christian [Scriptures](https://carm.org/dictionary-scripture) and relies on the validity and power of the gospel to change lives ([Rom. 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom.%201.16)). From the scriptures, we see that the unbeliever is sinful in his mind ([Rom. 1:18-32](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom.%201.18-32)) and unable to understand spiritual things ([1 Cor. 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Cor.%202.14)).

This means that no matter how convincing the evidence or good the logic, an unbeliever cannot come to the faith because his fallen nature will distort how he perceives the truth.  The only thing that can ultimately change him is [regeneration](https://carm.org/dictionary-regeneration).  To this end, the presuppositionalist seeks to change a person's presuppositions to be in conformity with biblical revelation.

Nevertheless, when using presuppositional apologetics, things fall into place rather nicely. You could consider presuppositional apologetics to be a kind of "theory" that you assume in order to explain the world around us. If you presuppose God's existence, then the world makes sense. You could then explain how we came to be, how there can be absolute laws of morality, and why rationality is what it is. Christian presupposition lists deal with these issues and others very effectively.

Furthermore when we presuppose the validity of Scripture, we are using the power of the word of God in our discussions ([Isaiah 55:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isa%2055.11)).

I have found that a person's presuppositions are extremely important when discussing God and the validity of Christianity.  I always ask diagnostic questions to find out where a person is philosophically and presuppositionally, so I might better discuss [Christianity](https://carm.org/dictionary-christianity).  This is a very important point to focus on because one's presuppositions will govern how one interprets facts.  Please consider the following dialogue as a realistic example of how this works.

**Allen**:  I am an atheist and evolutionist.  Prove to me there is a God.  
**Paul**:   I do not think I can do that because of your presuppositions.  
**Allen**:  Why not?  
**Paul**:  Because your presuppositions will not allow you to examine without bias the evidence that I present to you for God's existence.  
**Allen**: That is because there is no evidence for God's existence.  
**Paul**:  See?  There you go.  You just confirmed what I was stating.  
**Allen**:  How so?  
**Paul**:  Your presupposition is that there is no God; therefore, no matter what I might present to you to show His existence, you must interpret it in a manner consistent with your presupposition: namely, that there is no God.  If I were to have a video tape of God coming down from heaven, you'd say it was a special effect.  If I had a thousand eye-witnesses saying they saw Him, you'd say it was mass-hysteria.  If I had Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament, you'd say they were forged, dated incorrectly, or not real prophecies.  So, I cannot prove anything to you since your presupposition won't allow it.  It is limited.  
**Allen**: It is not limited.  
**Paul**:  Yes, it is.  Your presupposition cannot allow you to rightly determine God's existence from evidence-- providing that there were factual proofs of His existence.  Don't you see?  If I DID have incontrovertible proof, your presupposition would force you to interpret the facts consistently with your presupposition; and you would not be able to see the proof.  
**Allen**:  I see your point, but I am open to being persuaded if you can.  
**Paul**:  Then, I must ask you, what kind of evidence would you accept that would prove God's existence?  I must see what your presuppositions are and work either with them or against them.

Presuppositional apologetics differs from Classical apologetics "in that presuppositional apologetics rejects the validity of traditional proofs for the existence of God."[2](https://carm.org/presuppositional-apologetics#footnote2_2zz7tuu) A pure presuppositionalist tackles the worldview of a person and seeks to change the very foundation of how a person perceives facts.

Adherents to this position have been Cornelius Van Til, Abraham Kuyper, Greg Bahnsen, John Frame, etc.

* [1.](https://carm.org/presuppositional-apologetics#footnoteref1_je04pfg)Theism is the belief that God exists and is involved in the world.
* [2.](https://carm.org/presuppositional-apologetics#footnoteref2_2zz7tuu)Geisler, *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, page 607.

Love for the Brethren: The Forgotten Apologetic

by [Luke Wayne](https://carm.org/luke-wayne)  
4/27/16

Apologetics is not only good, it is necessary. It is a vital part of evangelism and also a means God uses to strengthen and secure the faith of His people. When we make our public case for truth or present our arguments against error, we are being obedient to the commands of the New Testament and following the example of the Apostles and other early believers, and of the prophets before them. Indeed, we are following the example of our Lord. The importance of this should never be diminished, and every believer must sanctify the Lord in his or her heart and always be ready to give a defense of the hope that is within us, ([1 Peter 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet%203.15)).

Yet there is often something missing in our image of apologetics. There is a powerful proof of our identity in the Lord and of the truth of our message that we fail to utilize, and I think it is clear that our apologetics and, indeed, our evangelism suffers because of it. We have a command backed by a promise of our Lord Jesus that points us to one sure way that all men will know that we truly are His, but it is a case we cannot make simply with memorized verses and carefully thought out arguments. Our whole lives are turned upside-down by this truly biblical apologetic methodology, but it is commanded and promised by God, and it works. It works because, apart from His Spirit's work in our lives, none of us can do it. It works because it is all of Him and not of us. To give some context, at the last supper, shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus washed His disciple's feet. Explaining this, He said:

"Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them," ([John 13:12-17](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2013.12-17))

It was in this conversation that Jesus went on to say the key point for our purposes here:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another,” ([John 13:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2013.34-35))

In the same way that Jesus loved His disciples, they are to love one another. It is a command, not an option, and if they are obedient to it then all men will know that they are indeed followers of Jesus. Even more, Jesus states twice in [John 17:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2017.21-23) that it is by the love and unity between Christians that the world will know the He was sent from the Father. Notice, here, that the world is not persuaded by how we love the world. Sure, we certainly are to love our neighbor and even our enemies. Of course, we are to be good Samaritans to the stranger in need and even show compassion on our persecutors, but Jesus is *not*talking about any of that here. The world will know who we are and who He is by how we love *one another*. How do you love your fellow believer? What is the love and self-sacrifice for one another within your local congregation? Christian fellowship, brotherly love, church community, life as one body in Christ, this it what Jesus says will cause all men to know that we are indeed His disciples. This is our missing apologetic.

Paul articulates the same thing to the church in Rome. He writes:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect," ([Romans 12:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.1-2)).

Notice something that is often missed. We are to present our bodies (plural) as *a* living sacrifice (singular). This is all of us offering our bodies together as one living sacrifice. We are no to be conformed to this world, but rather to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The world divides into Jew, Greek, Barbarian, wise, foolish, etc., but in the Gospel of Jesus Christ it is not so, ([Romans 1:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%201.14-17)). We magnify God and display His miraculous work in that enemies become brothers and strangers become friends. This is our acceptable worship of God, and only His Spirit and His gospel can do such a thing. By this, we "prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

That this is plainly what Paul has specifically in mind here is made clear by the rest of the passage. [Romans 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.3) continues by urging us not to think more highly of ourselves than we should. [Romans 12:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.4-5) reminds us that we are to function together as the many members of one body. [Romans 12:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.6-8) tells us each to use the gifts we have for one another's benefit. [Romans 12:9-16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.9-16) go on to say:

"Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Be in agreement with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation."

The whole passages is clear and consistent. Our sacrifice of true worship to God is an offering of unified love for one another. Our proof of God's will is our low estimation of ourselves and our high esteem for one another; our service to one another in brotherly love, righteousness, and truth. This is what the gospel makes us, and it therefore proves the gospel to those looking on. We see this play out powerfully in the early church:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved," ([Acts 2:42-47](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Acts%202.42-47))

The primary focus here is on the self-sacrificial love for one another in love and gratitude to God. What is the result? God adds to their number daily those who are being saved. Is that a promise that, if we just love each other that people will always flock to join our churches in each and every circumstance? No. But it is a powerful testimony to the fact that our love says something. Our lives speak to the world. Not our individual lives, but our life together. That we can be in Christ something that the world and the flesh cannot, a humble and loving people who put one another before ourselves, is a part of our testimony, and in fact it motivates us to call on our unbelieving neighbor to turn from his sins and trust in Christ and be made part of such a peculiar work of God! This does not replace evangelism or apologetics, it is a part of evangelism and apologetics and it fuels them both! This is the hardest part of our apologetic because it is not merely an apologetic. And cannot be faked just to make our point, and it cannot be substituted by programs or strategies. It must be genuine, which means it must be an act of God, which means we must be relying wholly and completely on Him and His Spirit in the gracious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As one final note, it must always be said that this love is not the squishy, emotional "love" of the world. Jesus said to love one another as *He* loved us, ([John 13:34](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%2013.34)). Paul said, "Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good," ([Romans 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.9)). Love is centered ultimately on the other person's holiness and eternal wellbeing, not on their immediate feelings. We certainly care deeply when they are hurting now, and are delighted when they are rejoicing now ([Romans 12:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.15)) but our goal is not personal happiness, but rather that we "Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer," ([Romans 12:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%2012.11-12)). Note what is said in [Leviticus 19:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Lev%2019.17-18), the famous "love your neighbor" passage:

"You must not harbor hatred against your brother. Rebuke your neighbor directly, and you will not incur guilt because of him. Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."

So love includes rebuke and correction. Love is concerned with righteousness and truth. This must not be forgotten. But love is also giving up what we have so that our brothers and sisters have what they need. Love is giving of our time to meet their needs. Love is needing one another and serving one another rather than going it alone. Whether in rebuke, in prayer, in material gifts, or in acts of service, love is putting the other person before oneself. This slaying of pride and crucifying of the flesh to honor your brother first is only possible in Christ, and that is why it is vital to a healthy and biblical Christian apologetic.

Christian Apologetics Bibliography

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6/6/2007

For further reading on [apologetics](https://carm.org/dictionary-apologetics) and areas related to it, please consider the following books which I have used in researching apologetics for this section.

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**Apologetics in the information age**

***by***[***Lita Cosner***](https://creation.com/lita-cosner)

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In today’s world, it is easy for someone to perform a few simple web searches and become a virtual ‘expert’ in atheism, with ready-made lists of supposed Bible contradictions. When such a person confronts their Christian friends (who often haven’t heard these objections before), parents (who are often not trained in sciences or theology), or pastor (who also may not have a broad educational experience), they often decide quickly that the evidence for atheism trumps the Bible. The lack of what they perceive to be an intellectually satisfying answer can serve as confirmation that the Bible really doesn’t have answers.

Today, it is more important than ever that Christians be equipped to “give an answer” ([1 Peter 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%203.15)). It can seem daunting. It is not possible to be prepared for all the possible attacks on Scripture. But it will help to remember that attacks often fall into one of several categories. Once you know how to identify and answer that *category*of objection, it becomes much easier to deal with a range of challenges. Some common types of objections include:

**1. *A priori* rejection of the supernatural**

Today, it is more important than ever that Christians be equipped to “give an answer” ([1 Peter 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%203.15)).

When someone objects to the [virginal conception of Christ](https://creation.com/the-virginal-conception-of-christ) because, “We know virgins don’t become pregnant,” or claims that there’s no way someone could [walk on water](https://creation.com/did-jesus-walk-on-ice), they are assuming naturalism. Everyone knows that virgins don’t *normally*become pregnant (that’s why Joseph was about to divorce Mary!) and that people will always break the surface tension of any body of water anytime they step on it. But one of the foundational claims of Scripture is that God can, at will, do unexpected things in creation. [Miracles](https://creation.com/god-miracles-and-logic) are not a violation of the natural laws God set up since God is not bound by them.

**2. Argument from silence**

When someone claims that “there is no evidence for the [Exodus from Egypt](https://creation.com/patterns-of-evidence)”, or pretty much any isolated event from the history of Israel in the Old Testament, they are making an argument from silence. First, the Bible itself is a historical record, so the Bible’s record of the event *is*[historical evidence](https://creation.com/bible-historical). And Scripture has a good track record of historical accuracy, so it should be trusted on that level even *before*bringing in the fact that it is inspired and [inerrant](https://creation.com/jesus-christ-on-the-infallibility-of-scripture) (which of course it is).

When skeptics see that Christians have intelligent answers for their objections, that can be an excellent opening to share the Gospel!

However, when we examine whether there is extrabiblical evidence for a particular event recorded in Scripture, we have to ask: What evidence would we expect to have been generated, and what would we expect to survive today? So when someone says “There’s no evidence for Israel’s Exodus from Egypt”, are they expecting a trail of footprints, debris, and graves from the nation to have survived thousands of years? There are two simple answers for this. First, the Bible specifically says their shoes and clothes did not wear out during their 40-year sojourn. This removes one set of potential evidences (not that organic material like this would be expected to last out in the open for 3,500 years, under most conditions). But people have also been living in the desert regions of the world for thousands of years and have left hardly any trace behind. So instead of conceding that the Bible must be wrong, we should turn the question around and question the questioner. “What evidence would one reasonably expect?” In reality, when looking for reasonable evidence in the right places, the Bible is the most historically verified ancient document ever written.

**3. Equating differing details with contradiction**

In the Gospels, sometimes two authors will record the same event with different details. For example, how many blind men were healed ([Matthew 9:27–31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%209.27%E2%80%9331) vs. [Mark 10:46–52](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2010.46%E2%80%9352))? And what exact wording did the rich young ruler use in his question to Jesus ([Matthew 19:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2019.16) vs [Mark 10:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2010.17))?

In these cases, the Gospel authors, like all historical writers, choose which details to include and which to leave out. They were writing to different audiences for different purposes, and so tailored their accounts, while remaining completely accurate, to emphasize the parts of the story most important for their audience.

**4. Confusing issues of textual transmission or translation with contradiction**

For thousands of years, Scripture was copied by hand. While this process was generally very accurate, copyist errors did occur. Skeptics often cite these instances while trying to make the case that the Bible cannot be inspired. For instance [2 Samuel 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Sam%2010.18) states that David killed 700 charioteers, while [1 Chronicles 19:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Chron%2019.18) says that it was 7,000 charioteers. This is the result of a textual error that occurred sometime during the nearly 3,000 years since Samuel and Chronicles were written ([1 Chronicles almost certainly preserves the correct number](https://creation.com/claimed-bible-errors)). Small variations in non-essential details are common among handwritten documents. However, we have better evidence for the accurate transmission of Scripture than for any other ancient writing. And, when considering all the different readings in the available manuscripts, there is *no* evidence for any significant doctrinal deviations. Errors in spelling and short duplications make up most all of the differences, and these are expected due to the nature of handwriting.

**5. Moral outrage resulting from failure to appreciate the context**

“If God was good, He wouldn’t have commanded/allowed X!” Whether it’s the slaughter of the Amalekites ([1 Samuel 15:1–9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Sam%2015.1%E2%80%939)), the exclusion of physically ‘imperfect’ men from serving in the Levitical priesthood ([Leviticus 21:16–24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev%2021.16%E2%80%9324)), or [Elisha](https://creation.com/evil-bible-fallacies) setting two bears on a gang of youth ([2 Kings 2:23–24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Kings%202.23%E2%80%9324)), the skeptic has an almost unhindered ability to express moral outrage about the Bible’s events and commands. However, in every case, there is important context in which the command or event makes sense. In one sense, the skeptic is actually engaging in a form of cultural snobbery by importing modern sensibilities into his interpretation of ancient events. In another sense, they are ignoring the fact that God, the Creator, has the right to judge people.

Keeping these simple principles in mind can help as you engage unbelievers in conversation. And of course, when dealing with specific objections, searching sites like [CREATION.com](https://creation.com/) can be a great help. And when skeptics see that Christians have intelligent answers for their objections, that can be an excellent opening to share the Gospel!