

## 1 **Welcome to Persuasive Faith**

- Learning to answer with love and respect the difficult questions people ask us about our Christian faith.

## 2 **Os Guinness, Christian author and social critic, writes...**

- “Where we meet people who are open, interested, and needy, we are ready to share our faith because most of our methods of witnessing assume that people are so. But when we find people who are not open, interested, or needy, we are stuck—though we mask our impotence by the compensating vehemence of our proclamation.”  
-in *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, p. 149-

## 3 **Paul, The Persuader**

- But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 9:22)
- So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. (Acts 17:17)
- And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. (Acts 18:4)
- Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:28)
- And he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, (Acts 28:23)
- Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men... (2 Cor. 5:11)

## 4 **Joining a Distinguished Line**

- “In response [to the negative view of Christians], some Christian writers of the second and third centuries produced literary defenses of their faith, boldly addressing political authorities and/or the wider populace. Referred to by scholars as the classic Christian ‘Apologists’ (from the Greek word apologia = ‘defense’), these writers not only responded to accusations against Christians; they also attempted to advocate and defend vigorously Christian beliefs in the larger intellectual world of their time.”  
(Larry Hurtado: *Destroyer of the gods*)
- Although Christian apologetic activity certainly continued throughout the life of the early Church...the second century was clearly the ‘golden age’ of apologetics. It was a time when the infant Church was especially vulnerable and a time when the persecution was particularly pointed. This reminds us that apologetics is a reactionary enterprise – it exists as a response to the cultural, political and intellectual environment in which Christianity lives.  
(Michael Kruger: *Christianity at the Crossroads*)

## 5 **Persuasive Faith: What Is It?**

- This is an equipping class. Designed to provide us with the tools necessary to convincingly defend our faith.
- The subject matter is chiefly addresses the credibility of the Christian faith (apologetics).
- We also want to encourage a walk with Christ that will make our witness authentic.

- Apologetics +. We will also consider related subjects such as various worldviews and history related to apologetics.

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- Apologetics is never having to say “I’m sorry...  
  
• ...for what I believe.”

## 7 **Persuasive Faith: What it’s Not**

- This is not a class on how to do evangelism.
  - That would be more of a methods class.
- This is not a class on Christian theology.
  - Apologetics is actually a category within the broader field of theology.
  - We will interface with theology at some points.
    - Since people’s objections are often directed at what we believe (our theology).
    - The best way to spot a counterfeit is by being familiar with the real thing.
    - We will learn to defend areas of historic orthodox theology. (e. g. creation, incarnation, Bible as God’s word and as reliable history, atonement, resurrection, etc.)
    - We will not explore in depth areas of theology where Christians frequently differ. (e. g. prophecy, predestination, spiritual gifts, age of the earth, etc.)

## 8 **Who Can Benefit From This Class?**

- We can. It can strengthen our own faith, and our confidence in sharing our faith with others.
- Our children, grandchildren, and relatives, who, if they are thinking, will have difficult questions about our Christian faith.
- Non-Christians and skeptics to whom God has called us to share our faith.

## 9 **A Plea From Friend on FB**

- In response to something I'd posted about recent defections from the Faith by well-known Christians in which I'd made some observations about apostasy throughout church history, a friend posted the following:

"I sometimes wonder about myself. I'm not famous, but my faith is beat all to hell.

One excuse is it's the way I'm built. Just can't simply accept much at face value, then when I dig things get complex. I get a burr under the saddle and go down many a rabbit hole.

Many questions with ambiguous answers can wear a fellow out. And there's pretty much no one to talk to at that level, or rather, no one I wish to burden.

It's odd to have so many insights and be blind and clueless at the same time."

## 10 **Some Objectives of Persuasive Faith**

- To discover answers as to why the Christian faith is reasonable.
- To learn where to go to find more answers on our own.
- To learn how to reason well and make good arguments.
- To learn how to identify poor reasoning in ourselves and in others.
- To be better equipped to understand advanced ideas.
- To help us to sanctify Christ in our hearts.

## 11 **How to get the most out of this class**

- Consistent Attendance
- Like most subjects, apologetics is best grasped by diligence.
- Many things we will discuss build on previous lessons.
- You can listen to missed lessons by going to [www.persuasivefaith.org](http://www.persuasivefaith.org)

## 12 **How to get the most out of this class**

- Participation
- Take notes to supplement the outline handout. Make a list of words you're not familiar with and their definitions. (Your own personal glossary.)
- Though the class is largely lecture, participate by raising questions and contributing your thoughts.

## 13 **How to get the most out of this class**

- Homework

- Take time each week to briefly review the previous week's handouts and notes and complete that lesson's review sheet.
- Select and read at least one book this year from the reading list, and share about it with the class.
  - In a few weeks I'll be passing around a signup sheet where you can designate which book you've selected to read.
  - Later in the year I will be passing out a sheet on which you can designate a Sunday on which you would like to share with the class about the book you've read.

#### 14 **Lions, and tigers, and book lists, oh my!**

- Read at least one book on apologetics.
- Briefly, tell the class about the book.
- Level of difficulty is indicated for each book.
- At the end of the sheet is a list of reference books which would make a good apologetics reference addition to any library.

#### 15 **About the Suggested Readings List**

- Select and read at least one book this year from the list. (You can find a more thorough description of the book by looking it up at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com))
- After reading the book, briefly tell the class about it. (See flyer on pointers for talking about a book.)
- The level of difficulty of the material in each book is indicated.
- Books on the list which are in the Trinity library have the call number listed.
- On the last page is a list of some apologetics reference tools which would make a good addition to any Christian's library.

#### 16 **Our Plan of Attack:**

- Module # 1: Introduction (3 wks)
- Module #2: Epistemological Issues (3 wks)
- Module: #3 Philosophical Issues (11 wks)
- Module #4: Worldview Issues (5 wks)
- Module #5: Science Issues (6 wks)
- Module #6: Authority (Bible) Issues (5 wks)
- Module #7: Historical Issues (5 wks)
- Module #8: Life/death of Jesus Issues (4 wks)
- Module #9: Resurrection Issues (3 wks)

17  **Next Week:**

- Apology or Apologia?