

Introduction to Apologetics

SESSION 11: A WORD TO APOLOGISTS

11D: My Dear Apologist, Please Be Kind

“God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.” (Romans 2:4 ESV)

1. Here are some examples that I have actually heard from apologists—from Christians—and these are the mild ones...
 - a. Only an idiot would fail to see the evidence for the resurrection. Only an idiot!
 - b. Your refusal to accept the evidence is simply a matter of your spiritual rebellion. You have no logical basis for rejecting what I say. You’re just a rebel with unclear thoughts...and you are intellectually lazy!
 - c. The fact that you reject the Bible is more about your total ignorance of history than anything else. It doesn’t take much ability to see that your claims about difficulties in the Bible are simply misguided and foolish. Your argument is hardly even an argument!
2. You may wonder, “But what about Jesus? Didn’t he use strong words with his opponents? After all, calling the Pharisees a ‘brood of vipers’ is not exactly soft pedaling, is it?”
 - a. Yet, and this is an important qualifier, Jesus’ mission was unique, his abilities divine, his knowledge perfect, and his judgment always correct.
 - b. And, lest we forget, he did rebuke his disciples upon the occasion of their wanting to call down fire in an Elijah-like manner and destroy an inhospitable Samaritan village, reminding his overzealous followers that he “did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”
3. Seems to me that Jesus was more concerned to be careful with the unbelieving and doubting than to silence their opposition and “put them in their proper place.”
 - a. His motive was more about love than anything else, and even his challenge to the religious leaders was animated by a desire for their conversion.
 - b. Did he not weep, crying out “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together...but you were not willing!”?
 - c. Did he not petition his Father to “forgive them, for they do not know what they do”?
4. It is kindness, dear apologist, kindness that is needed in our cultural moment.
5. What our interlocutors need is not the sting of our truth devoid of love, but our kindness.
 - a. Do they also need our clear thinking? Of course.
 - b. Our rational and impassioned argumentation? Certainly.
 - c. But now is not the time for impatient and caustic words. Now is the time for kindness.
6. What is most called for in this moment is a convincing position delivered with gentleness and tact, intentionally expressing the goodness of God through kindness in our demeanor, our tactics, and our words.
 - a. Kindness is countercultural, and it is what the world needs from us now as ever.
 - b. Kindness is the language of God’s love, and I am absolutely certain that none of us will ever stand before God and regret giving our reasons for the hope that is within us in a kind and charitable manner.

