

Teens Cycle One-Shift Six

Focus on Apologetics

Primary Objective

Students are the most effective in reaching students; however, they must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to share their faith and defend the truth of the Gospel.

How This Can Help You Reach Teens

In the game of baseball, you cannot reach second base without crossing first base. In rearing a child, they must learn to crawl before they can walk. These familiar principles establish concepts of presuppositions. Certainly, we desire to see students reach their peers, but this potentially intimidating proposition must be met with the encouragement of preparation and equipping.

1 Peter 3:15 establishes the most critical presupposition for a believer when it states, “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.” (1) A pre-requisite for sharing one’s faith is that they possess a faith that is genuine and real. Greg L. Bahnsen emphasized this when he said, “Christ must be the ultimate authority over our philosophy, our reasoning, and our argumentation, not just at the end, but at the beginning, of the apologetical endeavor.” (2) Simply stated, you cannot give what you do not possess.

Second only to one’s personal faith, is the establishment of Scripture as the ultimate authority for all of life, including apologetics. John M. Frame said, “As the ultimate authority, the very Word of God, it provides the foundational justifications for all our reasoning, without itself being subject to prior justification.” (3)

It is difficult to critique and deny the importance of establishing Scripture and the existence of God as building blocks in the defense of Christianity. Modern culture, however, tends to be more conversational in nature. In the practice of apologetics, there can be the tendency for dogmatic and fundamentalist ideals, which could be hard lined and offensive. This in no way minimizes the critical importance of defending truth but instead enforces the need to communicate with the gentleness

and respect that is mandated in 1 Peter 3:15. If one can establish basic presuppositions in a conversational format that respects the beliefs of a non-Christian, this method of apologetics can continue to be very effective.

In conclusion, the adherence to building blocks of faith must be essential to our life and the defense of our faith. There are basic beliefs that are not open for debate. As believers, we must protect the authority of Scripture and the existence of God. An apologetics method that holds fast to these ideals will continue to be effective in an ever-changing world.

Suggested Strategy

Recognizing that personal faith and the authority of Scripture should drive our approach to apologetics, consider the following approaches towards reaching and equipping the next generation:

1. Build up:

While the tendency when considering apologetics is to focus on studying other religions, it is critically important that students firmly grasp their faith. They must own their faith, and no longer borrow the faith of their parents or pastor. To accomplish this critical step of independence, they must be challenged to know what they believe and why. Careful consideration must be given as to who is teaching the students and what is being taught. While incredible curriculum is available for purchase, it must not supersede the use of God's Word. A curriculum should serve as a guide to understanding and applying Scripture while maintaining the ultimate objective of building up students with an ability to know God's Word and a confidence to walk in His steps.

2. Look out:

How do we see others? Do we see them as the enemy because they believe differently? Do we see their eternal destiny as mission critical? Keep in mind that we are all social creatures, but students value relationships with their peers greater than any other. By teaching them to see others with the love that God sees them, we can challenge them to engage in spiritual conversations with their peers. They must learn to look out and see their friend through the eyes of God.

3. Lean in:

The world in which we live is rapidly and radically changing. We have the choice to run in fear and build walls of opposition, or we can choose to engage this culture. To effectively lean in without compromise, we must develop and teach the importance of a biblical worldview. Simply stated, this means that we view the world through the lens of Scripture and allow God's Word to filter our view of the world and for the world. We cannot fully separate ourselves from culture, so teaching students to ask the critical question, "What does the Bible say", can teach them to apply Scripture and engage with culture to effectively

reach their peers.

4. Press on:

Quitting is never an option. We cannot retreat, and we never surrender. Ephesians 6 describes the spiritual war that we live within. An apologetic approach will commit to remind our students that we are in a war. Even when the world is changing like shifting sands under our feet, we must rest on the truth of God and His Word and press on.

While your church navigates the shifts of your reachingnextgen initiative, here are some suggested steps regarding a focus on apologetics:

1. Personal assessment:

Are you confident in what you personally believe? While we must challenge students to own their faith, it is wise for you to assess your own belief and build the confidence in your understanding of who God is and who He created you to be.

2. Practice personal evangelism:

A surefire way to help your students recognize their need to better understand their faith is to equip and inspire them to share their faith with others. When they are under fire and struggling to answer questions of the God they profess, they may then be motivated to learn more. Keep in mind this could backfire without intentional briefing and debriefing.

3. Pray intensely:

While U2019 began with a prayer initiative, we cannot engage in apologetic conversations or action without dependency on the Lord. Teaching students to pray must be woven through your ministry and focus on apologetics.

Ideas

Maintaining a commitment to apologetics should not be intimidating. Teaching kids to defend their faith can be easily integrated into what your church is already doing. If you are interested in going an extra mile, here are some suggestions:

1. Consider hosting a student conference on apologetics.

Feel free to contact the student groups department of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board on specific organizations that can facilitate such an event. Scheduling a concentrated event focused on apologetics can showcase the priority of apologetics in your ministry.

2. Become a continual learner.

your students will be naturally interested in what you are interested in.

3. Take a trip.

International mission experiences will revolutionize the mindset of your students. When they see other cultures worshipping in other religions, they should be driven to know their own faith more.

Resources

1. The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel
2. Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis
3. Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell
4. The End of Reason by Ravi Zacharias
5. Making Sense of Your World by Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet

Looking Ahead

Preview: (8) Student Outreach Event (or a DNow Weekend)

Plan: (7) Teens Giving to Teens

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1. The American Dictionary of the English Language. Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.
 2. 1 Peter 3:15. New International Version
 3. Greg L. Bahnsen, Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 1998), page 2
 4. IIM Magazine Online, Volume 1, Number 8, April 19 to April 25, 1999