

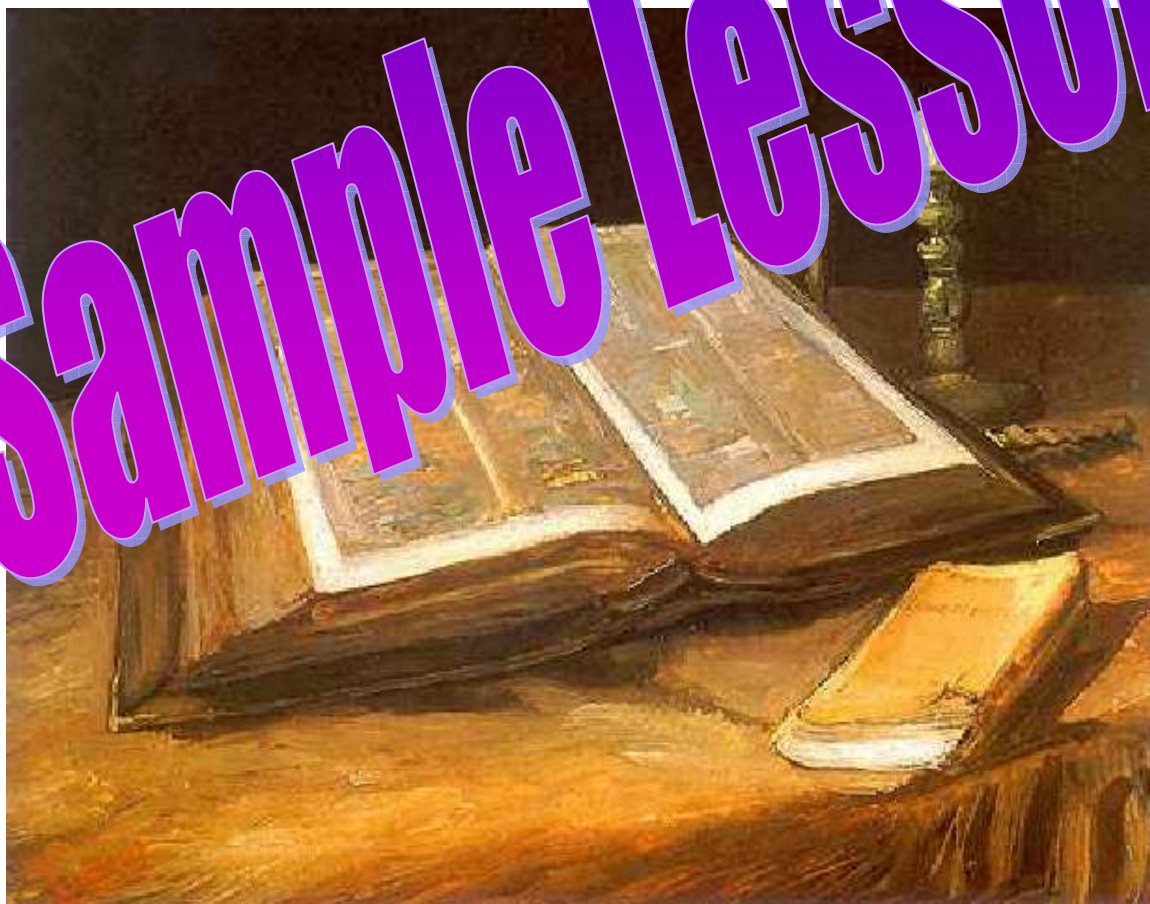
Say What You Mean: Defending the Faith

By JoJo Tabares

A Communication Bible Apologetics Study

Training young Christians to address common misconceptions and answer every day questions about the Christian faith.

SAMPLE LESSON



“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” -1Peter 3:15

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Defending the Faith Course Outline

1. Introduction to Defending the Faith
2. I'm already a good person. Why do I need God?
3. You have to give up too much to be a Christian. Christians don't have any fun!
4. Where did Cain's wife come from?
5. All religions are different paths to the same place/God.
6. Isn't God just a crutch for weak people?
7. How can you force your beliefs on others?
8. What about all the horrible things done in Jesus' Name?
9. Christians are intolerant and judgmental.

Mid Semester Checkup

10. I don't want to follow blindly. I want to think for myself.
11. Men wrote the Bible and men make mistakes.
12. Why does God need your money? Tithing
13. If God is so powerful, why doesn't He make me believe?
14. God can't forgive me!
15. Wasn't Jesus just a man?
16. Why is there suffering if there is a God?
17. Isn't the Bible full of contradictions, revisions and mistakes?
18. Doesn't the Bible go against science?

Semester Checkup

Final Thoughts

Appendix

Week 1: Introduction to Defending the Faith

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” -1Peter 3:15

As a Christian, your faith will be called into question countless times during your life. After high school graduation you may attend college. It may or may not surprise you to know that recent surveys of college professors show that a very large percentage admit to being quite liberal. Further, conservative media is beginning to report a growing percentage of anti-Christian sentiment in the college classroom. There have been reports of students receiving failing grades for writing about faith-based issues, for taking a Christian stance on an issue in the classroom or for speaking out about faith-based issues on campus.

If you decide to go straight into the workforce, your journey may not be much different from that of your college counterparts. Popular thinking, even among some Christians, is that there is a wall of separation between faith and science and that the line between sharing your faith and beating someone over the head with it has been almost eliminated. There is a growing anger toward anything Christian or even just the name of Jesus.

Several laws have been passed that make it difficult for Christians to speak out about their faith and it has become increasingly important for us to learn the most effective ways in which to defend our faith and talk about the political issues that affect our Christian walk and confuse the issues bringing the unsaved to Jesus.

Three Things Needed to Defend Your Christian Faith

1. The Bible

It is even more important these days that we Christians know our Bible. Technology has made the world a much smaller place; however, the amount of misinformation far exceeds the truth! The Father of Lies has been busy over my lifetime and he will continue to confuse and confound the real issues in your lifetime.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” -1Peter 3:15

2. Effective Communication Skills

The fact that you are right is irrelevant if you do not communicate it in such a way as to allow your audience (even an audience of one) to really hear you. What you say isn't as important, many times, as HOW you say it. If you tell someone the truth but you do it in a way that is disrespectful or incites anger, your audience is no longer listening to you. Not only haven't you gotten your point across, you may have created a wall around this person that will not allow anyone to penetrate, even armed with the truth in pleasant tones.

“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.” -Proverbs 18:19

The closer the world becomes, the more of a chance we have to share with non-believers about Jesus; however, we are sharing more with people we may not understand. It is vital that we know our audience when speaking with them in order to relate the information well.

3. Practice, Practice, Practice!

It isn't enough to know God's Word, you must be able to articulate it and that takes practice! Practice makes perfect, they say...well, maybe not perfect. Understand that there is no perfect way in which to communicate because each person is God's unique creation, seeing the world in his own way. It requires practice to be able to recognize the unique ways in which people see things. It takes even more practice to be able to formulate something in a way that shares some of yourself and Christ Jesus with that unique view. The more people you share with, the more you will be able to draw from that experience to help others understand your point of view.

How to Use Defending the Faith

Recommended Prerequisites:

Say What You Mean: Defending the Faith is a full year's course having 36 weeks of instruction. We recommend that your student(s) have completed the basic courses of Say What You Mean for Teens/Kids, Know Your Audience and Say What You Mean: An Advanced Speech Course (or equivalent). This will give your student(s) a background knowledge and practice in basic communication skills as well as a firm foundation in listening, persuasion and speech skills, so vital in defending your faith.

Why It's Important To Do Your Own Research:

You may be wondering why I don't just give you the answers to each of these common questions or misconceptions. My own kids have said I am a mean teacher. I make them do all the work.

I make you do the research for one main reason: You will learn more! If you have to do the research, it will teach you how to research a topic. If you have to do the research, it will make more sense to you. If you have to do your own research, it will help you to internalize and understand the issues at hand. If you have to do your own research, you will retain more of the information. All of these things allow you to become more familiar with the topics, more comfortable with communication and more grounded in God's Word!

How the Lessons Work:

Each week, students will address a typical question or popular misunderstanding about the Christian faith. Using the resources listed below (and any others at their disposal), students take notes on their findings. Each student is encouraged to take into account the typical objections or issues that many non-believers have about that topic. These will be listed in each lesson. From those notes, students will give a formal (five-minute maximum) speech outlining their answer to this topic. Grading charts are included to make evaluation and feedback easier.

Next, students will learn to put their findings into a concise format by having two or three casual conversations on the topic with characters in situations described in the lesson. Parents/Teachers are to play the part of the characters described as the student does his best to tailor his response to the specific person and situation.

Week 2: I'm Already a Good Person. Why Do I Need God?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” –John 3:16

Welcome to Week Two of Defending Your Faith. We are starting with the easier topics. As the weeks go on, we will introduce issues that are more difficult to answer. This week's topic is one that many ask and involves two different issues.

The first question addresses the issue of good works or the argument that you can be a good person and not believe in God, that just doing good works will get you into heaven. This is definitely not what the Bible teaches. However, another question inside of this for some people is that you can be a good, moral person and not put your faith in an Almighty God. I know several in my family who believe this way. Many of them hold the same values I do, only they do so without a belief that there is a Creator. This is a different interpretation of the question. These people will find it difficult to come to God because they believe that only bad people need to change the way they live and accept God.

The second question relates to a misconception that many Atheists or Agnostics have about God. They can understand why “bad people” would come to Jesus. Their lives are a mess! They are either sick from drugs or have made such bad choices in life that they need to reach for something supernatural in the hopes that they find a way out of the mess they have created for themselves. What they don't understand is why a “good person”, who never tried drugs, doesn't smoke, doesn't drink, doesn't have a hundred boyfriends, never had a baby outside of marriage, never stole anything... would need Jesus in her life.

Week 2: Research Tips

Research on this topic may include:

1. Parents
2. Pastor
3. Bible Concordance by topic: Salvation, Good Works
4. John 3:16
5. Isaiah 59:2
6. <http://www.carm.org/>
7. <http://www.answersingenesis.org>
8. <http://www.apologetics.org>
9. <http://www.christiananswers.net/home.html>
10. Google search: Christian Apologetics + Good Works

Do as much research as you need to until you feel you have covered this topic well enough to answer this person's questions. Use any sources at your disposal including the recommendations listed above. To make things easier, as you come across something of importance, jot it down in the lined spaces

Now that you have all of your information, examples, Bible quotes and facts, you need to work on your presentation. Here are some communication tips about people who may ask this question:

Week 2: Communication Tips

Just for Fun. How NOT to answer this issue:

“You’re not a good person! Nobody is. You’re a selfish, horrible sinner like everybody else!”

“You’re going to tell me that you never told a lie, never stole anything, never did anything wrong in your whole life?! You’re a liar!”

“Whadaya mean, why do you need God? Without God you’re going to burn in HELL!”

The first thing to do before answering anyone about the Lord is to pray. Pray that God would give you the right words, that He would call to your mind the perfect scriptures and that you would be a good and faithful servant to Him with your mouth.

Next you need to understand that this question usually comes from people who are fairly open to a discussion on Christianity. They are usually guarded and sensitive. Be careful not to intimidate them or give them too much information too soon. The best way to test the waters with them is to start slowly. Be respectful and speak with grace and out of love. After all, would you be inclined to follow someone who just called you a liar, a selfish horrible sinner or told you that you were going to ‘burn in hell’?

These are God’s fragile children. They are seeking but may be looking for an offense in order to close the door to Jesus. Don’t cause them to stumble so early on in their walk with the Lord. Tread lightly and err on the side of saying too little. Be sensitive to their feelings. If you leave them with a good impression, they may come back to you at a later time in order to ask more questions or they may do so of somebody else. Either way, the Lord’s work is done. We are all just parts of a puzzle in someone else’s walk with the Lord. It’s okay if we don’t lead them to salvation in one 10-minute discussion!

One way to determine how far they wish to be led is to do some Active Listening. Active Listening is when you not only listen with your ears to the words they use but also to their tone of voice, gestures, body language and, also, what they don’t say. This is a skill that needs to be cultivated, so practice Active Listening with your family and friends. See if you can determine when they are being sarcastic, when they are uncomfortable, when they need a shoulder to cry on or when they need to be left alone. This is a skill the Lord gives us for discernment. Pay attention to the other person in order to determine what he needs or wants from you when answering his question(s).

If this question leads to another, rejoice and keep going with him. This is a sign that he still wishes to discuss the matter and are most likely open to what you have to say. If he doesn’t ask another question and you discern that he is uncomfortable, you may want to move on to another topic of discussion.

Remember that everyone has the right to his own ideas and comes to them honestly. Remember also that it takes people some time for a new idea to make sense to them. Finally, keep in mind that people usually do the best they can with what they have. Sometimes they might get frustrated because their childhood training doesn't allow them to accept this concept right away or because they are struggling against the Lord's tugging at their hearts. Sometimes they may be emotional. Just love them and be a friend and take the higher ground should emotions show. Remain calm and loving and take them as far as they would like to go with the Lord for now.

Week 2: 5-10 Minute Speech

Practice giving a 5-10 minute speech on this topic using all of the information you found in your research. Take into account the communication tips in the previous section and **speech tips** found in the **Appendix** of this book. When you are ready, give your speech in front of your teacher/class. We have provided a grading form to make it easier for grading and feedback on your speech.

Oral Report Grading Criteria	Possible points	Points Earned	Comments
Credibility/Knowledge of Topic	10		
General Flow/Easy to Follow	10		
Backed Up with Facts?	10		
Body Language	10		
Eye Contact	10		
Volume/Tone	10		
Facial Expression	10		
Did you answer the questions fully?	10		
How respectful were you of them?	10		
How persuasive were you?	10		
Total Points	100		
Letter Grade	A, B, C...		

After your speech, go over your scores in the above chart and discuss in which areas you excelled and why, as well as which areas need some more focus. How could that have gone better? Would you feel comfortable discussing this issue with someone now? Why or why not?

Week 2: Two-Minute Conversation

This time, I want you to pretend that you are waiting in line the grocery store and someone notices either something you said or are wearing that shows that you are a Christian. In response, he asks you this question: "I'm already a good person. Why do I need God?" You may only have about one or two minutes with this person, not enough time to go into a 10-minute speech and a speech would not be appropriate. Have your Parent/Teacher play the part of this person waiting in line with you. Try out a few responses. Have your Parent/Teacher respond or ask further questions. Remember that you may be called away from this person shortly. Use Active Listening in order to bring up the best points you feel will minister to this person.

Oral Report Grading Criteria	Possible points	Points Earned	Comments
Credibility/Knowledge of Topic	10		
General Flow/Easy to Follow	10		
Backed Up with Facts?	10		
Body Language	10		
Eye Contact	10		
Volume/Tone	10		
Facial Expression	10		
Did you answer the questions fully?	10		
How respectful were you of them?	10		
How persuasive were you?	10		
Total Points	100		
Letter Grade	A, B, C...		

How did you do? Go over your scores and comments with your Parent/Teacher. What could you improve upon next time? What did you do well? If you have time, try it again!

Week 2: Email Response

In this assignment, your cousin emails you and in the course of other things asks you this question: “I’m already a good person. Why do I need God?” Your cousin’s family considers themselves Catholic but they do not go to church. Your cousin has never really read the Bible. She is struggling with her faith because her parents do believe in God but since they don’t go to church or openly pray, she questions if there really is a need to believe.

Keep in mind the previous Communication Tips, but also consider that this response will be via email. Email is a more difficult method of communication because it is devoid of your facial expression, body language, tone of voice and immediate feedback. This can cause miscommunication. Further, an email requires typing skills and stamina if the reply is long. It also can be difficult for people to read too much on a screen like this. Many people give up after reading a certain amount on the computer screen.

Your reply should be as brief and as concise as possible. Make it especially easy to follow and use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and paragraphs! Email users have a lazy habit of typing in “Ur msg n a way that is diff to read uses no capital lettrs r punctuation making the response hard 2 read cuz its one very loooooooong paragraph.” Try not to compromise your message for the Lord. Make sure it is clear and easy to read, as well as powerfully informative and thought-provoking.

OUTLINE NOTES:

How did you do? Go over your scores and comments with your Parent/Teacher. What could you improve upon next time? What did you do well? If you have time, try it again!

Week 2: For Further Study

If you have more time this week, want more practice or if you are in a co-op class and would like further home study assignments, this section is for you. In this section, I will give you one to three new situations in which you can handle this week's issue. Each new situation you put yourself in gives you more practice and skill.

- **A Young Girl Asks**

Suppose, this time, a 7-year-old girl asked you the same question: "I'm already a good person. Why do I need God?" What would you say to her? Keep in mind that you may have more time with this child, but you are speaking to someone who won't be able to fully understand all of your research. Go through your outline and see which points would most speak to her. Practice this faux conversation with your Parent/Teacher a few times and see if you can come up with a brief answer that will satisfy her and lead her to take further steps to the Lord.

You might ask her about her parents and what they believe. One of the things you might want to do is lead her back to her parents if they are Christians. They should know she is struggling with her faith at such a young age. If they are not Christians, you might suggest she get more information from someone who is a Christian in her family.

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Body Language	10		
Eye Contact	10		
Volume/Tone	10		
Facial Expression	10		
Did you answer the questions fully?	10		
How respectful were you of them?	10		
How persuasive were you?	10		
Total Points	100		
Letter Grade	A, B, C...		

How did you do? Go over your scores and comments with your Parent/Teacher. What could you improve upon next time? What did you do well? If you have time, try it again!

- **Neighbor Call:**

This time, your neighbor calls you and the conversation comes to him asking this question: “I’m already a good person.” He is from a Christian family and goes to church regularly but he is just having a problem with doctrine. Through the course of the conversation, you find that he isn’t really struggling with his faith as much as he is confused about getting to heaven. How do you answer him?

Remember that over the phone he cannot see you so you will need to choose your words more carefully but you will still be able to share with him using your tone of voice and answer any questions he has right away. Keep in mind that he may not have too much more time on the phone as you have already been talking for some time. Give him a scripture that might help him. You can look this up for this assignment.

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Credibility/Knowledge of Topic	10		
General Flow/Easy to Follow	10		
Backed Up with Facts?	10		
Body Language	10		
Eye Contact	10		
Volume/Tone	10		
Facial Expression	10		
Did you answer the questions fully?	10		
How respectful were you of them?	10		
How persuasive were you?	10		
Total Points	100		
Letter Grade	A, B, C...		

How did you do? Go over your scores and comments with your Parent/Teacher. What could you improve upon next time? What did you do well? If you have time, try it again!

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" -1Peter 3:15