

NYWC 2018 - *Deep Dive*  
Helping Teens Defend Their Faith with Clarity and Compassion  
Sean McDowell, Ph.D.

**I. Introduction and Class Format**

- a. Welcome!
- b. Content of the class:
  - i. Why teach students apologetics?
  - ii. Approaching apologetics with youth.
  - iii. Why do kids leave the faith?
  - iv. How do we motivate students to care about truth?
  - v. Local church apologetics.
  - vi. Engaging parents with apologetics.
  - vii. 14 teaching ideas
  - viii. Broad issues to cover
  - ix. Curriculum/Resource suggestions
  - x. Scope and sequence
- c. Material is available at [SeanMcDowell.org/DeepDive](https://seanmcdowell.org/DeepDive)

**II. WHY TEACH APOLOGETICS TO YOUTH?** (Blog: "[Five Reasons We Must Teach Apologetics to Students](https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/five-reasons-students-must-be-trained-in-apologetics)"<sup>1</sup>)

- a. The Bible commands all disciples to be apologists (1 Peter 3:15)
- b. Apologetics gives students confidence.
- c. Apologetics helps students hold on to their faith.
- d. Students have genuine apologetics-related questions.
- e. Students need to see that Christianity is *objectively* true.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/five-reasons-students-must-be-trained-in-apologetics>

### III. APPROACHING APOLOGETICS WITH STUDENTS

- a. Teach with humility (Don't overstate the evidence!)
  - i. 1 Peter 5:5 – “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6)
  - ii. Don't deride others (atheists, gays, Mormons, etc.)
- b. Don't give bad answers if you haven't studied. Don't be afraid to say you don't know (undermines trust).
- c. Show both sides (no straw men!)
  - i. Example of former student (girl) at UC Berkeley
  - ii. Using *God Delusion* with 11-12<sup>th</sup> graders
- d. Teach students *how* to think not *what* to think.
  - i. Information overload (JFK vs. 9/11)
  - ii. Youth pastor from Idaho about his Gen Z brother who thinks we can't know anything.
- e. Focus on the main issues. Keep the main thing the main thing.
- f. Be relational
- g. Connect apologetics to real life: “*So what?*”
  - i. Examples: (1) *Imago dei*, and (2) Resurrection
- h. Avoid fear-based apologetics. Be motivated by love!

### IV. WHY DO KIDS LEAVE THE FAITH?

- a. Question: What are the reasons you've heard about why young people are leaving the faith?
- b. ***You Lost Me*** (David Kinnaman, Barna) – 6 reasons
  - i. Overprotective
  - ii. Shallow

- iii. Anti-science
- iv. Repressive
  - v. Exclusive
  - vi. Doubtless
- c. Best research on kids leaving the faith: “Are Young People Really Leaving the Faith?”<sup>2</sup> (J. Warner Wallace)
- d. ***Sticky Faith*** (Kara Powell, Chap Clark)
  - i. Doubts students expressed during high school:
    1. Does God exist?
    2. Does God love me?
    3. Am I living the life God wants?
    4. Is Christianity true or the only way to God?
  - ii. ***Sticky Faith*** suggestions (truth *and* relationships):
    1. Talk about doubts (conversations)
    2. Ask questions, don’t lecture
    3. Intergenerational relationships
    4. Personal experience of grace
- e. *Faith and Families* (Bengtson, Oxford 2013)
  - i. Warm relationship with the father
  - ii. Grandparents
  - iii. Divorce rocks faith
- f. *Atlantic Monthly*: “Listening to Young Atheists”<sup>3</sup> (June 6, 2013)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://coldcasechristianity.com/2018/are-young-people-really-leaving-christianity/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/listening-to-young-atheists-lessons-for-a-stronger-christianity/276584/>

- i. Most of our participants had not chosen their worldview from ideologically neutral positions at all, but *in reaction* to Christianity.
- ii. Mission and message of the church was vague
- iii. They felt their churches offered superficial answers to life's difficult questions
- iv. They expressed their respect for those ministers who took the Bible seriously
- v. Ages 14-17 were decisive
- vi. The decision to embrace unbelief was often an emotional one
- vii. The internet factored heavily into their conversion to atheism

## V. MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO CARE ABOUT TRUTH

- a. Blog: "How Do I Motivate Students Who Don't Seem to Care?"<sup>4</sup>
  - i. Build relationships with students
  - ii. Take students out of their normal environment. Consider a weekend retreat focused on apologetics.
  - iii. Use pop culture illustrations in your teaching (e.g., "Jesus and the #MeToo movement"<sup>5</sup>).
  - iv. Challenge students
    - 1. Spiritual conversations (visits to religious sites; spiritual surveys\*)
    - 2. Role-play

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<sup>4</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/how-do-i-motivate-students-who-dont-seem-to-care>

<sup>5</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/jesus-and-the-metoo-movement>

3. Guest speaker, such as a Mormon missionary (or YouTube video)
  - v. Ask questions rather than give simple answers
  - vi. Bring back graduates to share their experience
  - vii. Apologetics mission trips<sup>6\*</sup>
  - viii. Have a long-term perspective

## **VI. LOCAL CHURCH APOLOGETICS<sup>7</sup>**

- a. Be respectful of leadership (Aggressive apologist got me to speak at a large church and I asked, “How can I serve you?”)
- b. Share vision with the pastor, and give it time
  - i. Share stories, emails, and blogs
  - ii. Give updates
  - iii. Provide resources (*summaries* of key books)
- c. Network with people who love apologetics in your church or town
- d. Host an apologetics event
- e. Invite an apologetics speaker
- f. If no support from the top, it may be time to move on.

## **VII. ENGAGING PARENTS WITH APOLOGETICS**

- a. Train parents
  - i. Parents influence students more than we do.
  - ii. Find out parental needs and meet them.

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<sup>6</sup> See sample itinerary at the end of this document. Also, you can have an expert train and take your group on an apologetics mission trip. See <https://www.maventruth.com/>

<sup>7</sup> See Mark Mittelberg, “Motivating for Apologetics” in *A New Kind of Apologist* (Harvest, 2016).

- b. Take-home tasks
  - i. Option 1: Interview parents about their faith journey
  - ii. Option 2: Have students teach material to their parents.
- c. Invite parents along on events
- d. Parent update, such as a weekly email. Keep it *brief* and practical.  
Or tell them about the *Cultural Translator* by Axis. Or start a FB group.
- e. Teach an apologetics class for parents
- f. Be a resource for parents
  - i. Books, websites, presentations, etc.

## VIII. 14 TEACHING IDEAS

- a. **Lecture**<sup>8</sup>
  - i. Example: Cosmological Argument, Evidence for the Soul
  - ii. My talks are at SeanMcDowell.org.
- b. Apologetics **Videos** and **Movies**
  - i. Illustra Media<sup>9</sup> and Reasonable Faith Animated videos on YouTube, and my short videos on YouTube.
  - ii. Movie: *Case for Christ*, Lee Strobel
  - iii. Videos: *Undaunted*; *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus*; *Jericho Unearthed*
- c. **Panel of Experts** (Abortion: PRC director, woman who has had an abortion, doctor, parents who have adopted, etc.)

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<sup>8</sup> Here's a few blogs to help with public speaking: <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/three-important-lessons-for-public-speaking>, <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/tips-for-public-speaking>, <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/why-are-stories-such-powerful-means-of-communication>,

<sup>9</sup> <https://illustramedia.com/>

- d. **Small Group Discussion** (*Wheatstone Academy*)
  - i. “What’s a Good Question?”<sup>10</sup> Fred Sanders (April 18, 2014)
- e. **Case Studies**
  - i. Examples: (1) Hostile professor who aggressively insults Christian students in class, (2) Baker asked to bake a cake for a same-sex wedding, (3) a friend who is suffering and questions God’s goodness.
- f. **Question Box**
- g. **Role-playing**
  - i. See “Atheist Encounter” on YouTube
  - ii. Do it yourself or bring someone in.
- h. **Spiritual Surveys**
- i. **Guest Speaker**
  - i. Have students take ownership
  - ii. Example: Answering questions at Pacific Coast Church.
- j. **Weekend Retreat** on an apologetics theme
  - i. Build in enough sessions that flow systematically.
  - ii. Have a follow-up study immediately afterwards.
- k. Host or Attend an **Apologetics Conference** (Get Biola on the Road!)
- l. Host or Show a **Debate** or **Conversation**
  - i. Student debate at CVCS
  - ii. Discussion with Ryan Bell at Church Everyday (on YouTube).
  - iii. My conversation with Matthew Vines on the Bible and Homosexuality (available on YouTube)

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<sup>10</sup> <http://scriptoriumdaily.com/whats-a-good-question/>

### m. **Movie Analysis**

- i. Options: (1) Teaching series, (2) Small group at a home, (3) Go out to a movie (*Bohemian Rhapsody*)
- ii. Book suggestions: *Hollywood Worldviews* (Brian Godawa)
- iii. Blog examples: “Worldview Behind **Infinity War**,”<sup>11</sup> and “**The Greatest Showman** Challenges Modern Tolerance,”<sup>12</sup> and “Two Biblical Themes in **Black Panther**.”<sup>13</sup>

### n. **Lead a Discussion**

- i. Observe good discussion leaders at a local Christian school
- ii. Teaching practices:
  1. In person with students (e.g., God’s will at GL)
  2. Lead discussion in class (e.g. living together)

## **IX. BROAD ISSUES TO COVER WITH YOUTH**

### i. **Truth**<sup>14</sup>

1. What is truth? How do we know truth? Why is it important? The difference between objective and subjective truth. The relationship between truth and freedom.
2. Exercise - Blog: “Who Cares about Truth?”<sup>15</sup>
3. Group activity: If relativism were true?

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<sup>11</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/the-moral-question-behind-infinity-war>

<sup>12</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/the-greatest-showman-challenges-modern-tolerance-but-doesnt-go-far-enough>

<sup>13</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/two-biblical-themes-in-the-black-panther>

<sup>14</sup> See talk, “True for you, but not true for me” at [sean\\_mcdowell.org](http://sean_mcdowell.org) or YouTube. Also, see chapters 2 and 3 in *Ethix: Being Bold in a Whatever World*.

<sup>15</sup> <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/who-cares-about-truth-activity-to-help-students-grasp-the-importance-of-truth>

ii. **Existence of God**

1. Cosmological argument
2. Fine-tuning
3. DNA
4. Morality
5. Ontological argument

iii. **Historical Jesus**

1. Deity of Christ (biblical teaching and fulfilled prophecy)
2. Resurrection

iv. **Is the Bible reliable?**<sup>16</sup>

1. Can we trust the Old and New Testaments?
  - a. Manuscript evidence
  - b. Archaeological evidence
  - c. Internal evidence
  - d. Extra-biblical evidence

v. **If God, Why Evil?** (Hell)

1. Distinguish between logical and emotional problems of evil.
2. This includes hypocrisy, bad things done by Christians, violence in the Old Testament, and so on.

vi. **Ethics**

1. Discuss various issues including “hot” topics that are timely and “normal” topics that are timeless.

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<sup>16</sup> See Sean and Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 2017).

## X. CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES

- a. **Bible:** *Apologetics Study Bible for Students* (CSB)
  - i. Use it in your talks.
  - ii. Equip parents with how to use it.
- b. **Youth Groups:**
  - i. **Evidence for Faith Apologetics Course**<sup>17</sup>

\*2 week free trial of DYM Gold: [dym.today/gold](http://dym.today/gold)
  - ii. **Advocates:** An 8 to 32-week to apologetics study for high school students with AWANA<sup>18</sup>.
- c. **Conferences**
  - i. **Summit Ministries:** A life-changing 12-day worldview training experience for students in California, Colorado, and Tennessee ([Summit.org](http://Summit.org))
  - ii. **Impact 360 Immersion:** Two-week summer worldview and apologetics experience for high school students in Pine Mountain, Georgia.
  - iii. **Re-Think:** Weekend apologetics conferences featuring leading apologists and thinkers today tailored uniquely for students.
  - iv. **Maven** Student conferences incorporate the arts and story into a weekend of learning apologetics ([maventruth.com](http://maventruth.com)).

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.dymuniversity.com/store/5jW9SR5Y>

<sup>18</sup> <https://awanaym.org/journey/advocates>

## XI. SCOPE AND SEQUENCE<sup>19</sup>

- a. Process of forming a scope and sequence
  - i. Committee
  - ii. Visit other schools/churches
  - iii. Adapt my own
- b. All students get CSB *Apologetics Study Bible for Students*
  - i. 9<sup>th</sup> grade:
    1. More Than A Carpenter
    2. Old Testament (weave apologetics throughout)
    3. Logical fallacies (*Fallacy Detective*)
    4. Sexual Purity
  - ii. 10<sup>th</sup> grade:
    1. New Testament
    2. NT Apologetics (*The Case for Christ*)
  - iii. 11<sup>th</sup> grade:
    1. Systematic Theology (*Knowing What You Believe*)
    2. World Religions and Cults
    3. Tactics (How to engage others in dialogue)
  - iv. 12<sup>th</sup> grade:
    1. Worldviews
      - a. What is a worldview? What are the components of a worldview?
      - b. What is the relationship between faith and reason?
      - c. Is it okay to doubt?

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/bible-answer-man/read/articles/teaching-apologetics-to-the-next-generation-by-sean-mcdowell-17107.html>

- d. What is true freedom?
  - e. What is happiness?
  - f. Examine worldviews: Existentialism, Nihilism, New age, Postmodernism, Marxism.
  - g. Analyze Film
2. Understanding Intelligent Design
  3. *Mere Christianity* (C.S. Lewis)
  4. Getting prepared for college (*Welcome to College, Morrow*)

## - Conversational Survey #1 -

\*Brett Kunkle at Stand to Reason first developed this survey

**(1) Do you believe in God or a higher power?**

- Why or why not?
- What do you think he, she, or it is like and why?

**(2) Do you believe truth exists? If so, do you think we can know truth?**

- Is there such thing as objective/absolute truth?
- Is there religious truth? If so, how do we find it?

**(3) Do you believe there are moral facts (right and wrong) that everyone should follow?  
Or do you believe that morality is relative to individuals or cultures?**

- Why or why not?

**(4) Do you think abortion should be legal or illegal?**

- Why or why not?

**(5) Do you believe in an afterlife?**

- Why or why not?
- (If “yes”) What do you think the afterlife is like? Why?

**(6) Who do you believe Jesus was?**

- Why?
- Where do you get most of your information about Jesus from?

**(7) What do you think about Christianity?**

- Why?
- What has given you this impression?

**\*Final Question:** If you had one question you could ask a Christian, what would it be?

## - Conversational Survey #2 -

### **(1) Is there a meaning to life? If so, what is it?**

- How did you come to that answer?
- Where does meaning come from?
- Is life's meaning merely subjective or is it objective in any way?

### **(2) What is the deepest desire of the human heart?**

- Are there desires of the heart that seem to be universal and shared by all of humanity?
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### **(3) What is the key to human happiness?**

- How did you come to that answer?
- Where should people look for an answer to this question? Why?
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### **(4) Who is the most influential person who has ever lived and why?**

### **(5) What are the most serious problems the world is facing?**

- How did you come to that answer?
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### **(6) How can we best fix the problems of the world?**

- How do you envision yourself contributing to the solutions?
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### **(7) If you could ask God one question, what would it be?**

- How do you think He would answer?

**\*Final Question:** If you had one question you could ask a Christian, what would it be?

# **The Berkeley Mission**

## ***Itinerary – Capistrano Valley Christian Schools***

### **Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup>**

- 12:45 pm Load vehicles/Prayer
- 1:30 pm Driving away...
- Drive time: approximately 6 hours (415 miles)
- 5:30 pm Dinner Stop (students pay)
- 9:00 pm Arrive at Higher Ground Church / unpack
- 9:30 pm Opening Session (Sean)
- Higher Ground - ground rules
  - Student-led Worship
- 11:00 pm Lights Out

### **Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup>**

- 7:00 am Wakeup
- 7:30 am Breakfast at church
- 8:00 am Morning Worship
- student-led music
- 8:15 am Group Preparation
- Jason Carlson – “Homosexuality”
- 9:30 am Presentation and Q & A by Dick Hewetson
- topic: “Homosexuality”
- 11:00 am Debrief (led by Sean McDowell/Jason Carlson)
- noon Depart from HG for Berkeley’s campus
- have students bring warm clothes, backpack, survey materials
- 12:30 pm Lunch (students pay)
- students can find someplace to eat in downtown Berkeley
- 1:30 pm Visit The Campanile (tower on Berkeley’s campus)
- \$2/general admission; \$1/students under 17
  - check out the view of Berkeley
  - silent prayer for Berkeley
- 2:30 pm Surveys at Sproul Plaza/Downtown Berkeley
- Possible locations on Berkeley campus:
    - Sproul Plaza
    - Student Union lobby
    - Heller Lounge
    - Doe Library
    - FSM – Free Speech Movement Café
    - Coffee shops on Telegraph Ave.

- 4:00 pm
  - Conversational Surveys #1
  - Debrief - CRU
  - location: small amphitheater by the stream
- 5:00 pm Dinner @ Blondie's Pizza (students pay) or we have dinner with GracePoint Church
- 6:00 pm Meeting with GracePoint church on campus
- 9:00 pm Depart for HG
- 9:30 pm Debrief (led by Sean McDowell)
- 10:30 pm Free Time
  - play in the gym
  - groups games
  - study time
- 11:30 pm Lights Out

**Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup>**

- 7:00 am Breakfast
- 7:30 am Morning Worship
  - student-led music
- 8:30-9:30 Talk by Jason Carlson on the existence of God
- 10:00-11:30 Presentation and Q & A by Richard Carrier
  - location: HG
  - topic: scientific evidence for/against God
- 11:30 Debrief (led by Sean McDowell/Jason Carlson)
- 11:30 am Depart from HG
- noon Lunch (students pay)
  - students can find someplace to eat in downtown Berkeley
- 1:00 pm Surveys at Sproul Plaza/Downtown Berkeley
  - location: Berkeley campus
  - Survey #2
- 3:30 pm Debrief
  - location: small amphitheater by the stream
- 3:15 pm free time
- 4:30 pm Depart for HG
- 5:00 pm Dinner (students pay)
  - maybe just order pizzas (?)
- 6:30 pm Presentation and Q & A by David Fitzgerald
  - David Fitzgerald belongs to the San Francisco Atheists organization
  - location: HG
  - topic: Jesus' Existence
- 8:30 pm Debrief (led by Sean McDowell/Jason Carlson)

- close with worship and prayer
- 9:30 pm            Pack up for Friday morning departure/Clean HG  
 10:30 pm        Lights Out

**Friday, 28<sup>th</sup>**

- 6 am            Pack up luggage/Pack vehicles  
 6:30 am            Depart for home  
 8:30 am            Breakfast (students pay)  
 12:30 pm        Lunch (students pay)  
 3 pm            Arrive home

**Ground Rules**

1. **Safety First:** always go in pairs, stay inside, not the best neighborhood
2. **Clean Up:** we are guests, take care of the church, other people are using, broken?
3. **Guys' & Girls' Privacy:** stay out of each other's rooms
4. **All Meals & All Meetings**
5. Remember...we are on a mission trip!

**Clean Up**

1. **Empty trash cans in all rooms**
2. **Vacuum all rooms**
3. **Clean kitchen**
4. **Clean bathrooms:** toilets, counters, sink, shower, mop floors
5. **Put moved furniture back**
6. **Pack up personal luggage**