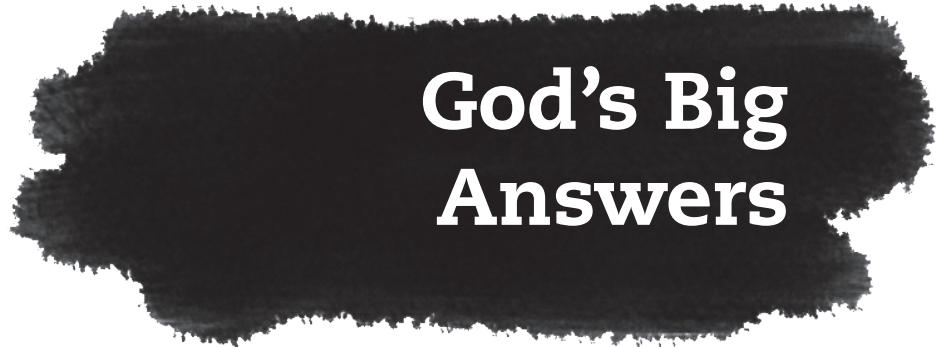




**Life's Big
Questions**



**God's Big
Answers**



by Brad Alles

Table of Contents

Introduction: <i>The Reason for Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers</i>	6
Chapter 1 Are You Ready to Defend Your Faith?	8
Chapter 2 What Is a Worldview?	13
Chapter 3 Does Evolution Explain the World?	21
Chapter 4 Does Creation Explain the World?	29
Chapter 5 What Are Humans?	40
Chapter 6 Is the Bible True?	55
Chapter 7 What Is the Canon?	62
Chapter 8 Was Noah's Flood a True Worldwide Event?	69
Chapter 9 What about Dinosaurs?	83
Chapter 10 Did Jesus Really Exist?	90
Chapter 11 What about Jesus' Death, Resurrection, and Their Effects?	102
Chapter 12 What Is Postmodernism and the New Tolerance?	122
Chapter 13 How Can We Witness Effectively Today?	137
Endnotes	152



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Introduction

The Reason for Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers

According to a 2002 Barna poll, 70 percent of church youth left home after high school and then left the Church.¹ When asked the reason for leaving the Church, 32 percent (in an open-ended question) listed intellectual skepticism—religion made no sense, there was no proof, or there were no answers to legitimate questions (2005 National Study of Youth and Religion).² Young adults have questions—does the Church have answers?

Our culture redefined some terms that affect our youth and how they process God's Word. For example, 70 percent of church youth say no absolute moral truth exists, since truth is created by individuals and cultures.³ Tolerance means recognizing that everyone's beliefs are equal—there is no truth greater than any other. Furthermore, no one has the right to judge anyone because claiming objective truth or judging the beliefs and lifestyles of others involves trying to dominate them.⁴ Young people say there is no truth—is that true?

Josh McDowell notes that our young people's view of their church and youth groups is not positive. Besides church services, which are just events to observe with no relationships to people, youth find

worship irrelevant to issues of today. Moreover, youth groups are often boring, with untrained volunteers and little content.⁵ Youth say fellowship is irrelevant—does the Church have anything to say to us today?

Since our youth have questions about the veracity of their faith in a culture that says there is no truth, what are we doing to show them that Christianity is true and Jesus is real? How can we keep them in the one true faith? Hopefully, this resource will answer young people's questions and reveal truth that *is* relevant for us today.

I have been teaching religion in two Lutheran high schools for over twenty years. During that time, I have been invited to speak on various topics to youth and youth workers in fifteen states. Everywhere I go, people have the same basic questions. Young people want to study the Bible, but they also want to know it is true. What's more, they want to know how to apply Scripture to their lives. So back home I start every class, every day, with the same approach—are there any questions we should answer? I found that by explaining why Christianity is true and the Bible is dependable, students grow stronger in their faith. Here's an e-mail from Jackie, a 2008 graduate of Milwaukee Lutheran High School. After her first year of college, she wrote:

I wanted to sincerely thank you for last year. I grew so much in my faith during my last two years at Milwaukee Lutheran. Your class did so much for me; I really don't know where I would be without it. It really makes me wonder how people without faith survive. You are one of the people of God that I respect most, and I wish that I could know the Bible like you do. Without your class I would not be able to answer half the questions that I have been faced with already this year. So I just wanted to say "thank you" for helping me grow.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we all grow in faith, and may this book shed light on the issues that trouble people in their search for the truth. May they find it in Jesus Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6).

slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

We are always to be ready to gently and respectfully share the reason for the hope we have—why we believe in Jesus as the Savior who rescued us from our sinful condition and will grant us eternal life in heaven one day.

**Apologetics is
defending the faith.**

As we defend our faith, explaining why we believe in Jesus as Savior, *what* we say is important—the content of our apologetics must be solid. We must know the facts and be armed with knowledge. However, that’s just one part of the defense of our faith. The other part of the defense is *how* we say it—the delivery of those facts and knowledge. Peter instructed us to use “gentleness and respect” in explaining our hope that we have in Christ. Paul, by the inspiration of the Spirit, says a similar thing in 2 Timothy 2:24–26.

And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

People need to hear the truth, and how you share that will make a big difference. Being a know-it-all or acting in a condescending manner is not appropriate—being kind in instructing others is what God calls us to do.

Chapter 1

Are You Ready to Defend Your Faith?

If someone asked you why you were a Christian, what would you say? Would you say you’re a Christian because you were raised that way, or would you say you’re a Christian because you “just believe it”? Wouldn’t that answer fit a person of another faith—perhaps a Muslim or a Hindu? When you give these responses to the question, you reveal a pretty weak rationale for believing Christianity. Do you have a good defense for why you believe what you do?

There is a better answer to the question of why you are a Christian. You are a Christian because Christianity is true. How can you defend that statement? That’s the purpose of this book. So welcome to the wonderful world of *apologetics*.

Apologetics is, by definition, a defense of your actions or beliefs. It is explaining *why* you believe *what* you believe. We can find this concept in the Bible in 1 Peter 3:15–16.

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are

What we say (content) and how we say it (delivery) is important.

Paul brings up another important aspect of apologetics. Remember that God saves people, not you. Yes, we need to know information and how to share it well—the “what and how” of apologetics. But our knowledge and instruction will not change anyone’s sinful heart—only God the Holy Spirit can do that. He will convict the sinner of his or her condition through the Law and reveal the remedy for his or her sinful condition through the Gospel.

Reasons People Reject Christ

Even as we share the Gospel and practice apologetics, some people may not believe what we have to say. In the book *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell explains.⁶ Some will not believe since they are in a “snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). Spiritual warfare is a real thing. When Jesus told the parable of the sower and the seed, He said some seed falls on paths and is eaten by birds before it can take root. Jesus explained what He meant in Luke 8:11–12:

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

You can defend the faith, handling both areas of content and delivery well, but some won’t believe because they are under satanic attack.

Some won't believe due to spiritual warfare.

Another reason some may not be converted to Christianity after you explain why you believe what you do is that people stubbornly refuse to admit they are wrong. Jesus faced a similar attitude in John 5:39–40. “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.” The religious leaders of Jesus’ day would not come to Jesus, even though He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. In light of this prideful rejection of the truth, we can see why we are called to practice apologetics with “gentleness and respect.” It will be easy to get mad at people, but that won’t help your witness.

Some won't believe due to their prideful refusal to admit they're wrong!

A third reason some people reject faith is that becoming a Christian means leaving a lifestyle of sin. Jesus explained this in John 3:20 when He said, “For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.” You can say the right thing in the right way when defending the faith, but some will choose to stay in their sin rather than receive the Savior. They may feel that they’re not *that* bad, or that they will convert later.

Some won't believe due to their unwillingness to change their lifestyle.

Knowing the three reasons why some reject the Christian message helps us diagnose why people aren't converted. We must realize that even if others reject faith, we did not waste our time because God's Word is effective.

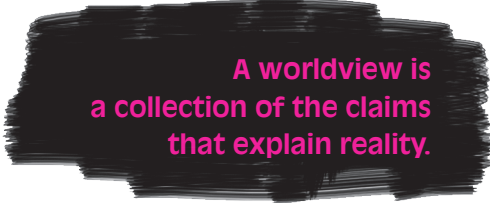
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10–11

Furthermore, later someone else may add to what we shared, and ultimately the Holy Spirit changes people, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6–7: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” Apologetics isn't easy, but it is definitely worth it!

Chapter 2

What Is a Worldview?

If you want to defend the Christian faith to anyone, whether a Muslim or an atheist, you need to understand that person's worldview. A worldview is a collection of the truth claims that explain the world and reality. It helps people make sense of the world; it is like a map they use to navigate through life.⁷ Their worldview will tell them what is real and how to live, and it will answer basic questions.⁸ For example, Christianity teaches that God exists, that faith in Jesus saves people from their sins, and stealing is wrong.



**A worldview is
a collection of the claims
that explain reality.**

Technically, religions and philosophies have formal worldviews, and people adopt personal worldviews. Christianity and secular humanism, both dominant in the United States, have formal worldviews that explain reality and behavior and that answer