

A WHITE PAPER ON

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CHRISTIAN  
APOLOGETICS,  
THE LOCAL CHURCH, AND  
LOCAL CAMPUS MINISTRY

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AIIA INSTITUTE

THE BULWARK COALITION

PUBLISHED OCTOBER, 2017

## PREFACE

On June 9-10, 2017, the **AllIA Institute** (<http://AllIAInstitute.org>) called together forty-five vocational Christian apologists, campus ministry leaders, pastors, church leaders, and other evangelical Christian believers with a passion for Christian apologetics.

Participants came from each of the six New England states, and beyond.

The purpose of the gathering was for those present to put their heads together for 24 hours of prayer and focused thought in developing fresh and creative ways to promote Christian apologetics, and the practice of effective apologetics at the local level, in our generation.

This **Think Tank** event was an integral part of **The Bulwark Coalition's** (TBC) work in 2017. The TBC itself is one of four components of AllIA's **The Best Defense** (TBD) initiative. TBD also included the historic **WHY JESUS? 2016 conference**, held in Bangor, Maine, in May of 2016. The TBC is a select alliance pledged to work, pray, and strategize together for the defense of historic Christian truth and the promotion of effective cutting-edge Christian apologetics in and through local evangelical churches in New England and beyond.

**NATHAN RITTENHOUSE** of **Ravi Zacharias International Ministries** (RZIM) flew in from WV to serve as a resource person and guide for this special one-time event.

## PURPOSE

It is our hope and prayer that the contents of this paper will **encourage** and **equip** you and your church or campus ministry to make a greater priority for apologetics within your sphere of influence, and we trust that it will spark other initiatives of the sort.

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**The Bangor Statement** is also posted as a .pdf file on AllIA's website. It is not copyrighted. We encourage you to join us in encouraging its wider distribution.

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# BANGOR STATEMENT

## on Christian Apologetics and the Church

**RECOGNIZING** that many Americans today either disparage religious belief altogether or are confused about what to believe and are therefore indifferent to religion, and

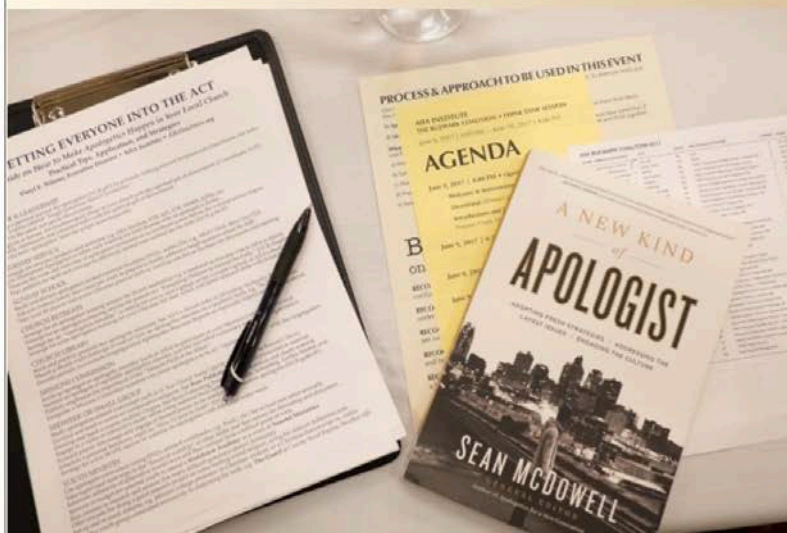
**RECOGNIZING** that evangelical Christians and the Biblical worldview are more and more under siege in America's increasingly secular culture, and

**RECOGNIZING** that in many cases those who profess Christian belief, young and old, are not always well-prepared or confident about articulating a rational basis for their faith, and

**RECOGNIZING** that as a result of all this there is a growing void and lack of a basis for meaning and hope and morality in our nation, and many who are spiritually lost, and

**RECOGNIZING** that there is much evidence that God has historically used apologetics as a key means of effectively addressing the concerns expressed above,

**WE THEREFORE CALL ON** pastors, church leaders, campus ministry leaders, para-local-church organizations, and Christian believers everywhere, to be creative and resolved in placing a fresh emphasis and priority on equipping believers to practice and promote loving Christian apologetics in our time, beginning here in New England, and to do it all in a spirit of hopefulness and with dependence on the Word of God.



**ADOPTED & SIGNED  
UNANIMOUSLY BY**  
45 participants from all six  
New England states meeting  
in a **Think Tank** session on  
Christian Apologetics,  
organized by the **AIIA  
Institute** as part of its  
**Bulwark Coalition** initiative,  
held on June 9-10, 2017,  
in **Bangor, Maine.**





### INSIGHTS FROM **NATHAN RITTENHOUSE** OF RAVI ZACHARIAS INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES (RZIM)

#### **What is happening in apologetics today?**

The difference can be summed up in one word: tone.

There is a posture shift in how apologetics is done in our world. It can be compared to how you get into a swimming pool. You can do a cannonball and it makes a big splash, but it doesn't make many friends. If we stand only on formal logic, that strips away our capacity to disagree with respect. Sometimes it seems apologists and theologians are good at theological kickboxing. The trend today is to match the way Christ related to people, with grace and respect, with the message of the Gospel of Christ.

I am finding that the tone in which you speak dictates the tone in which people respond to you. Rather than approaching conversations with arrogance and off-putting self-confidence, we take a more humble stance, respecting and listening to those who oppose us, and welcoming their input into the conversation. The truth of the Gospel will win out, and we have seen many people come to Christ as a result of this more humble tone.



#### **What is the unique advantage of church-based apologetics?**

We live in a post-integrity culture. A post-truth culture is really a post-integrity culture. In the recent debates over "fake news," integrity is the issue. The majority of truth claims you see on a daily basis are marketing claims made by people trying to convince you that something is true in order to make money from you. Marketers, for example, may try to convince you that your hair needs a unique fix which only their product can provide. If someone on the street tries to sell you something, you are skeptical. Recognizing that we live in a world where we are skeptical about all truth claims will give us some sympathy for the skeptics we encounter. What makes a difference, I think, and cuts through the skepticism, is the integrity of the person offering a truth claim. Integrity matters. And we find this integrity in a healthy church community. Churches are designed by God to be a visible representation of himself, a witness to the reality of the living Christ. Church-based apologetics has the advantage of being able to point to a demonstrable representation of that truth. I can say this is what it looks like when we actually live this out to its natural conclusion. Without the flesh and blood evidence of a church, then I am only speaking about theory.

#### **What is one potential weakness of our traditional apologetics approach?**

The idea of a Christian worldview is a Christian concept. It is not something the secular world talks about. The adult post-Christian does not have a logical, rational worldview. If somebody is willing to hold an illogical worldview, what makes us think that our logic will convince them of the Truth? Apologetics does a good job of addressing worldviews that are well structured, but the more 'fluid/quasi-spiritual' groups may be falling through the gaps of our focus.

#### **Who needs to work at being more effective apologists?**

Young people are being asked by their peers or by their teachers to answer questions even their parents cannot answer. This, then, is not a generational issue. It is not just the high school students who need help. All people need to work at it.

## INSIGHTS FROM **THINK TANK PARTICIPANTS**

### ON ENGAGING NONBELIEVERS

**What practical strategies can believers use to create opportunities for intentional conversations with nonbelievers outside the walls of the church?**

This was one important question considered by those present at **AIIA's Bulwark Coalition Think Tank event**. Participants shared from their own experiences, from what they've read on the subject, and as the result of their own creative thinking. Their input was noted during group discussions, through responses to a form sent to them in advance of the gathering, and in follow-up email conversations. What follows here are a number of practical ideas on how to respectfully engage nonbelievers in meaningful conversations about matters of faith.



#### **Apologetics starts at home.**

*"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels."*  
*Hebrews 13:2, NKJV*

The benefits of inviting nonbelievers and seekers home for a meal and conversation are far reaching on many levels — for Christians who open their homes and hearts, for children and other family members who get to help serve and be in on the conversations, and for guests who can converse with Christians in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

An informal dinner with no agenda has value of itself. But framing the occasion as an opportunity for a planned conversation may prove more productive, as long as the plan is well communicated to guests ahead of time.

#### **Observations and ideas about inviting nonbelievers to dinner:**

- **Hospitality is a context for conversations about truth.** "I'd love to see more Christians practicing hospitality in their homes, apartments, and college dorm rooms as a context for real conversations about Truth. Hospitality, which means 'loving the stranger,' is very practical, and involves sacrifice.... We are incapable of measuring the work of the Holy Spirit as we welcome people into our lives and homes." — **Mardi Keyes**



- **A normal, non-confrontational dialog takes down barriers.**

“To open the doors to apologetic ideas in today’s culture, I think we just need to have more dinner and normal conversation with nonbelievers to allow them to see that we are (mostly) normal, rational people who simply hold some different presuppositions. [We start by] inviting nonbelievers to a meal, promising a non-confrontational time of discussion afterwards for a set period of time. The discussion time encourages a nonbeliever to vent about their problems with Christians on various topics, which strangely serves to take down barriers and encourages the nonbelievers — after they have a chance to speak and to listen to a Christian response to the topic. Just having a normal conversation tends to defuse, build respect, and open doors.” — **Jamie Stultz**



- **Hospitality helps create the right conditions for revelation.**

“I think of apologetics like lightning, as a reaction or response when the right conditions are present. I think the right conditions are: first, an articulated Christian worldview, and second, open interactions with people of other worldviews in the culture. So I think the best thing is to teach the Scriptures with an eye toward cultivating a biblical worldview, and to encourage hospitality and the building of relationships outside of the church in order to provide those life-on-life interactions where the ‘lightning’ will be produced in the natural course of things.”

— **Neal Patel**

**Create meaningful conversations with nonbelievers though safe, non-confrontational events in neutral venues.**

*“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 Peter 3:15 NIV*

Outside the home, but also outside our churches, we can engage non-believers in countless ways in the normal ebb and flow of community life, workplace relationships, at the corner store, or over the backyard fence. But we can also be intentional about creating a venue for generating conversations. Here are a few ideas for creating safe spaces for conversations through which the Holy Spirit may ignite within the non-believer a hunger to learn more.



- **The book club.** “The best apologetics opportunity that I’ve had has come from a gentleman in my church who started a book club with non-Christians and he invited me to come along. To be [totally candid], it is a ‘book and beer club.’ And we don’t even read Christian books! But every book, and these are books of literature, brings up Christian themes, apologetics themes, transcendental ideas. I think what has worked about it is that ... it isn’t a church activity. Another thing that has worked about it is that it is a community exercise. We are building relationships. So it is not about arguments and lectures, it is about sharing life together and sharing ideas together. We have not seen conversions to this point, but what we have had are lots and lots of very charitable discussions about important ideas.” — **Neal Patel**

- **The survey and coffee giveaway.** “One simple activity I have done a lot on campus is something we call ‘proxy stations’ in our lingo, or simply ‘interactive tables.’ We go to a highly trafficked area and bring coffee or hot chocolate or cider. And then we ask people, ‘Will you take our one question survey for a free cup of coffee?’ And we prepare an





open-ended question like: 'Is the Bible worth studying?' or 'Do you think Jesus was resurrected?' or 'Do you believe there is a God?' And after we listen to their answer, we then give them their cup of coffee. Then, if they are willing, and they often are, we ask a follow-up question like, 'How did you get to that conclusion?' I tell students, one of the goals, even at the lowest bar, is that the person leaves having had a positive conversation with someone who is a Christian. If that is the lowest goal achieved, then that is still a great movement toward Jesus. Secondly, it is a good discipleship moment. The student can watch, and enter in fairly comfortably. I believe this is also easily transferrable to other contexts."

— Joel Wentz

• **Community action, working alongside others.** "We can promote existing community action / development projects where believers are encouraged to work alongside non-believers to advance a particular cause. For example, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship has sponsored a

service week in New Orleans called SERVE-UP, where believers and nonbelievers go to work on building houses together in impoverished areas, most often those which were impacted by Hurricane Katrina." — Ryan Goding



• **Lead an adult education class.** "I noticed in our local adult education program they had classes in yoga, meditation and other spiritual practices. So I decided to offer a class called Discovering Authentic Christianity. In the course description, I invited 'open-minded people interested in testing the validity of Christianity' and described the class as a place where you could come with your toughest questions. Nine people came. Some were Christians and some were not. We met once a week for two hours, every Thursday evening. After the eight weeks, we transferred to the church and I kept those relationships going. But I think being at the church did prevent the group from growing. I think to continue in a neutral location would have been better." — Chris Viera

#### **More ideas for non-confrontational events in neutral venues:**

- Christian professor gives lectures on social issues on secular campuses, and says that these events are co-sponsored by Christian and non-Christian organizations working together, thus guaranteeing a mixed audience.
- create a presentation on important social issues for youth or adults, held in neutral venues, where there may be a 25-minute presentation on some topic followed by an extended time of open discussion; or host a regular discussion group at a local café.
- support local non-profit endeavors, like a soup kitchen or community service group, where there are always opportunities for conversations, but there is no cost or commitment to you or your church other than showing up to help out.
- hang out where military veterans gather; start conversations about patriotic themes, weave in a spiritual perspective using true stories of founding fathers or war heroes who had a Christian testimony.



- challenge your church's media team to use their skills not only to bless the church, but to produce videos for nonbelievers, engaging the culture with creative expressions of biblical truth.
- open your eyes to what is around you, like the church that built contextualized and respectful relationships with the students attending the art school across the street.
- start a cancer support group or an eldercare support group in your community as a way to serve others and build relationships that may naturally turn to conversations about faith.

**NOTE:** These ideas are cited to whet your appetite. What other kinds of planned activities can you imagine which would create opportunities for meaningful conversations with nonbelievers that you could have outside the walls of the church?



## ON TRAINING, TEACHING, EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

**What are the best ways to promote effective cutting-edge Christian apologetics in and through evangelical Christian churches and campus ministries?**

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV*

Another key question entertained by participants at the event involved the matter of how best to promote effective, cutting-edge apologetics in and through local churches, and on campus. Participants shared the following insights on how to increase the percentage of believers who are able to provide a clear, rational, helpful answer when asked about their Christian hope and faith.

Many of these responses might be initially seen as criticism of the Church or church leadership. Yet this is criticism from the inside — fellow servants taking a sober view in order to further advance, not destroy, what the Holy Spirit is doing in the Church and what His intentions are for ministry in and through churches. Of course we are cautioned to be slow to judge, to judge lovingly when we do, and to keep a watchful and humble eye on our own behavior. Still, based on the patterns of Christ and the Apostles, we believe that there is a time to speak boldly.

Here follows a number of observations, guidelines, and ideas from participants about how churches can be better equipping believers to be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in us.



## 1. DON'T OVERLOOK CHILDREN AND PREPARE TEENAGERS FOR CHALLENGES

- **Train the next generation.** “Start young, start early, and stay connected with the students throughout their school career.” — **Melissa Preble**
- **Scripture memorization and catechism for Kids.** “We need to begin with younger children learning to memorize Scripture. And it would not be a bad idea if we renewed the old practice of teaching the catechism.” — **Wayne Hansen**

### More comments on training youth and children:

- “Pray for God to build into our youth a noble spirit and a hunger and thirst for Christ, to make them a generation of truth.”
- “Teach young people to identify and challenge the untruths that are presented in the media.”
- “We need parenting courses in how to lead children and teens to faith, and how to have honest conversations with teens.”
- “We need age appropriate curriculum that encourages and shows parents how to engage with their children in discussing challenging questions they would face in this day and age.”
- “If it was up to me, I would require the first day of Sunday School to have junior high and older teens watch the 45-minute video, “The Toughest Test in College,” by Focus on the Family. It opens up parents’ and students’ eyes to what is awaiting them ‘out there.’”



### Would this work? One participant's dream for comprehensive apologetics training for kids:

- **Envisioning an apologetics training program for children and youth.** “My idea is to work with Christian schools, homeschool co-ops, other homeschool groups, basically any venue that would desire to work with us, to bring apologetics to youth of all ages. Using age-specific curriculum, working during the school year, we would prepare for an ‘apologetics summit’ of sorts at each school. I want to help the youth to become critical thinkers, able to stand on their convictions, able to stand firm against ridicule, lies, and peer pressure. I want to train the youth to *own* their faith in Jesus Christ, rather than holding onto their parents’ apron strings in regard to their walk with the Lord, and to be able to intelligently share their faith with nonbelievers. This type of training is necessary to help preserve our fundamental Christianity. The culture today is targeting Christians, both subtly and overtly. It is time to take action and push back. It is time to prepare future generations to stand firm.” — **Melissa Preble**



## 2. TEACH BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTALS

While there was strong sentiment that more apologetics teaching needs to be employed in every church setting — from the pulpit to the classroom to small groups — there was also a call from some Think Tank participants for a first step. Several expressed concern that rather than jumping in with apologetics-focused teaching, there is a critical need for more theological basics to be taught — that we are not ready to be apologists if we do not know the fundamentals of our faith. Once this foundation is laid, then the ability to respond to tough questions about the faith comes more naturally. Could churches, pastors, and parents be doing more at the grassroots level to make sure that believers of all ages are being grounded in the truth? Here's how two of the participants put it.



### • **Teaching biblical fundamentals as a foundation for apologetics.**

"I believe there needs to be a renewed emphasis on preaching and teaching the content of the Bible. Knowledge of the Bible's content is a **necessary prerequisite** for developing a consistent Christian worldview. Once evangelicals are armed with a good working knowledge of the content of the Bible and are able to articulate a consistent theology of essential Christian doctrine, they are then prepared to develop apologetic responses to the most common questions raised by non-believers and believers alike. Knowledge of the basic content of our faith reduces fear and raises confidence in promoting and defending our faith beyond the comfortable settings of our Christian communities." — **Wayne Hansen**

- **Reintegrating apologetics as part of a full-orbed Christian approach to life.** "The classic apologetic arguments are good and helpful tools, but if this is what we mean when we say 'Christian apologetics' — if what we are talking about can be reduced to a how-to for articulating an effective argument, then I'm afraid we've missed what apologetics is really about. It's ultimately about articulating and giving an answer for the hope we have in knowing Jesus. Frankly, I'm not sure people can articulate that hope well, not because they can't learn an argument, but because many are spiritually dead — they don't know Jesus. In short, I think the answer comes down to discipleship. Maybe the Church should take a big step back and ask whether we are being faithful to the Great Commission, and in so doing whether or not we are being faithful to Christ himself (sanctifying him as Lord in our hearts, 1 Peter 3:15). These two things, apologetics and discipleship, are fundamentally connected. I think if we isolate apologetics as a discipline from the responsibility to carry out the Great Commission, we perhaps unintentionally handicap our Christian witness. Apologetics should in some way be reintegrated as part of a full-orbed Christian approach to life." — **Ryan Goding**



## 3. APOLOGETICS CURRICULA NEEDED

Another theme often repeated by participants is the need for good apologetics curricula.

- **Train the trainers strategy.** "On the local church level, I'd begin with an intentional apologetics training curriculum and a select local group within the church to become better trained and active in continuing education, e.g. RZIM Academy, etc." — **Rick Francis**

- **Equip the ‘apologetics nerds.’** “Many people study apologetics, but they don’t use what they know. We can take them further by training them how to share their knowledge. Seek out the ‘apologetics nerds’ and get them involved in teaching. I would find and train five lay persons [in a given geographical area, those who would be willing] to actively teach apologetics in their local church bodies. The practical strategy would be to first connect with pastors to find five laypersons with an apologetics interest, and take them through a certificate program (RZIM, Biola, etc.). The goal would be to have the lay leaders each teach one or more lessons from the program to the group. Ideally, each person would prepare a hand-out, a list of resources for further study, and a PowerPoint for the lesson they would be teaching. We would give group feedback/encouragement and would share our lessons with each other so that, by the end of the course, everyone would have a complete set of lessons to go back and teach to their home church bodies.” — **Travis Pelletier**



#### **Here are a few additional comments on the need for good training materials:**

- “I am planning on a 6 to 12 week study for seniors on an intro to apologetics in the Fall. I could use a list of materials for an Apologetics 101 type class. Something very basic.”
- “If I had the resources, I would purchase curriculum that can be generally helpful to believers from all stages of life. If there were no such existing curriculum, I would [sign up for] RZIM’s core module course in hopes to better equip myself to develop a curriculum for my church.”
- “What the church needs is renewed biblical teaching that connects Bible doctrine with the practical issues of life, focused presentations/training on responding to contemporary issues, and help to develop a consistent biblical worldview.”

#### **4. LEAD FROM THE TOP**

- **Apologists in the pulpit.** “The lead pastor needs to be fully on board; otherwise apologetics gets relegated to the fringes. Perhaps building something that convinces and engages lead pastors to see apologetics as more than an intellectual pursuit would be profitable. Churches with apologists in the pulpit become very interested in apologetics!” — **Rick Francis**
- **Leaders need to lead.** “Congregations need to see the leaders in the church supporting the advance of apologetics, so that the importance of knowing how to defend our faith would be modeled by people they already know and trust: their pastors, elders and teachers.” — **Josiah Stockwell**
- **Leaders, please lead.** “Get the leadership on board with apologetics and evangelization. Provide resources that would encourage building a stronger relationship with Christ. I believe with all my heart that this approach will cultivate compassion for people. It would make their desire to be used by God Priority #1.” — **Paul Preble**





### More comments on the need for active leadership from the pulpit:

- “Churches need to focus on **preaching the fundamentals instead of anecdotal sermonettes**. We need reminders that the Great Commission is for all believers, not just church elders or those specially gifted.”
- “I would like to see churches teaching apologetics and expecting members to be able to give an answer for the reason of the hope that is in them. Pastors need to teach church-goers to think, question, delve into the Bible, and do research on their own. No more spoon-feeding! Teach the people how to feed themselves!”

## 5. JUST DO IT

- **Beyond teaching.** “[We should] not only teach people how to answer, but give them opportunities to do it, because if we just *teach, teach, teach*, and don’t give them opportunity to apply it, then they can lose confidence. Give them a safe place to apply what they have learned.” — **Melissa Preble**
- **Role playing.** “I’m just convinced that people need to *do* it! Practicing role-plays to get comfortable with conversations, inviting people into their homes, etc., but mostly I try to de-mystify the idea that we can’t proclaim what we believe to others without offending them or pushing them away. This really requires *doing* it together — going on prayer walks, stopping at community centers to engage people, spiritual surveys, and more.” — **Joel Wentz**



## 6. PASTOR TO PASTOR

- **Pastor-to-pastor peer support.** “Smaller geographically-centralized meetings (similar in format to this Think Tank event) happening sporadically where pastors who are apologetically-minded could come together and discuss apologetic challenges and help one another brainstorm on how to deal with them. A community to talk through challenges and help prepare for specific difficulties could be very encouraging and helpful. If minutes or conclusions were shared with other geographic groups, could this not become a sort of network of answers available for people all over the Northeast?” — **Mike Penza**



- **Apologetics pastors’ luncheon.** “I would host/cater an occasional area luncheon a few times per year for pastors in my region to discuss apologetic issues and content with an eye toward equipping one another for preaching apologetically and training the congregation.” — **Neil Patel**

## 7. MORE PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

Here are more ideas from Bulwark Coalition participants for increasing the percentage of believers who are able to provide a clear, rational answer when asked about their faith:

- **collaborate:** work together with other churches to sponsor training and outreach events
- **design periodic church retreats** for the purpose of apologetics training
- **determine to make churches safe spaces** for church members as well as guests to express doubts and questions
- **invite recent college graduates** to come back to their home church to speak about challenges to their faith that they experienced in college
- **just do it:** move beyond instruction to action, help church members start to apply what they learn in safe, mentored settings
- **reality check:** challenge believers by having them read and discuss atheist material in the context of a small group or Sunday School class
- **resources:** develop a set of attractive, question-specific printed handouts for pastors to hand to believers or seekers following a conversation, to reinforce biblical truth as it applies to their specific questions

### WHERE TO GET TRAINING

L'Abri Southborough <http://labri.org/mass/index.html>

L'Abri, a residential study center, invites pastors, college ministry staff workers, seeking non-Christians, and many others to spend time at one of the branches of L'Abri, the New England branch being in Southborough, Massachusetts. Students may come for any length of time, up to a full term. Terms are usually between two and three months in length. To learn more, visit the website.

“In our home-like context of hospitality, apologetics is done in a very holistic, non-professional, pastoral way, as believers and non-believers share life together. Apologetics can be observed in lectures, meal time discussions, one-on-one conversations, etc., and in all cases, there is a pastoral atmosphere – as opposed to a debating atmosphere.” — **Mardi Keyes**

**RZIM online classes** <http://rzimacademy.org/>

“The **RZIM Academy** [online apologetics course] is only 12 weeks long, so it can't be too deep, but it would stimulate, train, and whet the appetite of those that are beginning to think apologetically. One



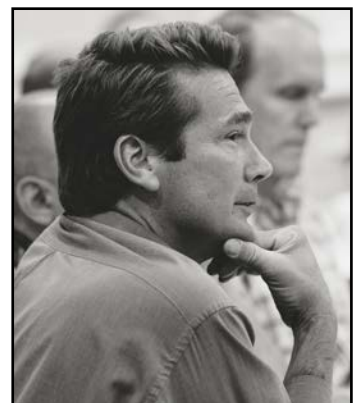


of the problems with training seems to be the busy schedules that people often keep. I'm a big fan of person-to-person interaction, but the online format does give some scheduling flexibility to some folks that can't commit to meeting in person weekly."

— Nathan Rittenhouse

**Allia Institute** <http://aiiainstitute.org/>

Allia is prepared to consult with, and offer training to, pastors, church leaders, campus ministry leaders, and other believers, about how to prioritize the promotion and practice of effective cutting-edge Christian apologetics in the local church, on campus, and beyond. Please visit Allia's website (listed above) for further information about our services, resources, and ministry.





# PROMOTING THE PRACTICE OF EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS IN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH & MINISTRY

## *A Guide for Pastors & Church Leaders* — *Practical Tips and Strategies* —

Compiled by **Daryl E. Witmer**, Executive Director | AIIA Institute • [AIIAInstitute.org](http://AIIAInstitute.org) | v170824

### **PASTOR & LEADERS**

- Develop a personal passion for apologetics by exploring relevant Scripture, key books on apologetics, and many other relevant resources.
- Use and explain the term ‘apologetics’ from the pulpit more frequently.
- Prepare and preach a series entitled “Ten Tough Questions About Christianity.”
- Preach to the mind, not (only) to the emotions.
- Recognize, encourage, and publicly commission those in your church who are exercising their spiritual gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10).

### **WORSHIP SERVICE**

- Pray publicly for believers to develop the ability and courage to effectively defend and contend for the faith.
- Promote the work and web sites of worthy apologetics ministries on overhead screen before the worship service begins.
- Arrange for resource speakers and seminars by representatives of apologetics ministries, e.g. RZIM, STR, AIIA, Evidence for Hope, NEIRR, L’Abri, AiG, and more.
- Use *Dramatized Apologetics* or other such material as the basis for brief dramas with an apologetics theme during the Sunday morning and/or evening service.

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

- Study and discuss apologetics-related curricula using booklets, DVDs, audio CDs, e.g. AIIA’s *Think About That* CD) and see AIIA’s web store for options.
- Ask one student (upper teen or adult) per week to prepare to briefly address a tough question about the faith.
- Take your SS class to visit a non-Christian place of worship; use this as the basis for discussion and teaching.

### **CHURCH RETREATS**

- Plan an apologetics training session for church leadership at AIIA’s Study Center.
- Arrange for a training session for parents on: “Equipping Kids to Defend Their Faith.”
- Arrange for an *Apologetics Saturday* or weekend retreat for your men’s group or a couple’s group, at AIIA’s Study Center.

- Arrange for special apologetics training for your Christian Education staff, better acquainting them with helpful resources.

## CHURCH LIBRARY

- Stock and promote key apologetics resources. See AIIA's web store and *AIIA's Annual Index of 100 leading Apologetics Resources* for ideas.
- Mount a church-wide challenge to read or view a valuable apologetics resource on a quarterly basis.
- Provide to church members and friends (perhaps during the Sunday service) periodic two-minute Apologetics Resource Reports on especially helpful apologetics material.

## MISSIONS COMMISSION

- Invite an apologist or apologetics ministry to participate in your annual Missions Conference next year.
- Support an apologist or reputable apologetics ministry (campus-based or otherwise), just like any other missionary or missions organization.
- Publicly emphasize the importance of the "Mission Field of the Mind."
- Designate a Missions Committee member who loves apologetics to be an 'Apologetics Advocate' for your congregation.

## MIDWEEK OR SMALL GROUP

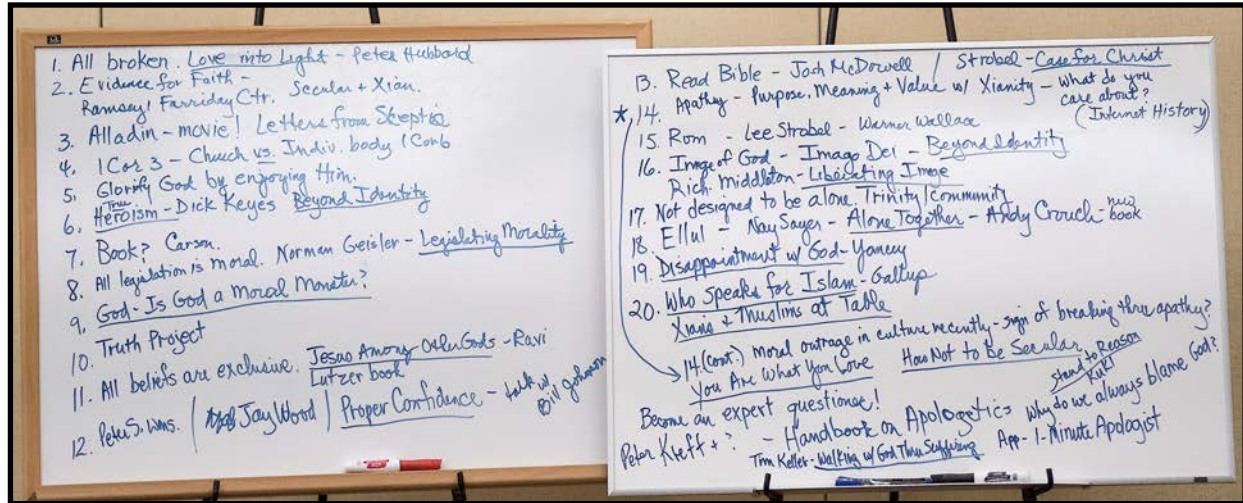
- Study apologetics-related curriculum such as Greg Koukl's *Tactics*, or many others listed on AIIA's web store under curriculum.
- Develop and teach a course on comparative religions. See **Rose Publishing's** PowerPoint presentation and wall chart resources.
- Develop and teach a course on Bible Origins. See **Rose Publishing's** PowerPoint presentation and wall charts material.
- View and discuss a video, or engage in an interactive study, using material from Sproul, Zacharias, Ankerberg, Geisler, Strobel, and many others.
- Encourage fervent focused prayer for all participants in the group to be obedient and increasingly effective apologists.
- Schedule a personal testimony night on "How I Came to Faith."

## YOUTH MINISTRY

- Use apologetics curriculum (such as TrueU material) for at least one series annually in the upper teen or college-age groups.
- Take supervised field trips to the 'house of worship' of some other non-Christian faith, and then return for a thorough debriefing and discussion.
- Invite in and interview adherents of alternative worldviews, and then meet in a follow up session to critique what was said from a biblical point of view.
- Raise funds to sponsor one or more youths to attend **Worldview Academy, Summit Ministries**, AIIA's **DEFENDERS**, or some other similar training event.
- Run contests to research and answer five really difficult questions about Christianity.
- Offer generous rewards for submitting a quality research project on a particular leading world religion.
- Set up real or mock debates, e.g. atheistic college professor vs Christian student, or a Christian homeowner vs a cultist coming to the door.
- Launch a youth group committed exclusively to defending the faith, e.g. *The Guard*.

# HELPFUL APOLOGETICS RESOURCES

Along with the following thought-provoking resources cited by one or more of our **Think Tank participants**, you are encouraged to consider a compilation of current and leading resources on **AIIA's web store at [AIIAInstitute.org](http://AIIAInstitute.org)**. Of course, these listings are certainly not exhaustive, and AIIA does not necessarily endorse every view in every resource cited.



## GENERAL APOLOGETICS

**A New Kind of Apologist: Adopting Fresh Strategies, Addressing the Latest Issues, Engaging the Culture,** Sean McDowell, Harvest House Publishers, 2016

*Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really Is Believing*, James W. Sire, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2014

*Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction*, John M. Frame, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994

*Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2001

*Christian Apologetics*, Norman L. Geisler, Baker Books, 2013

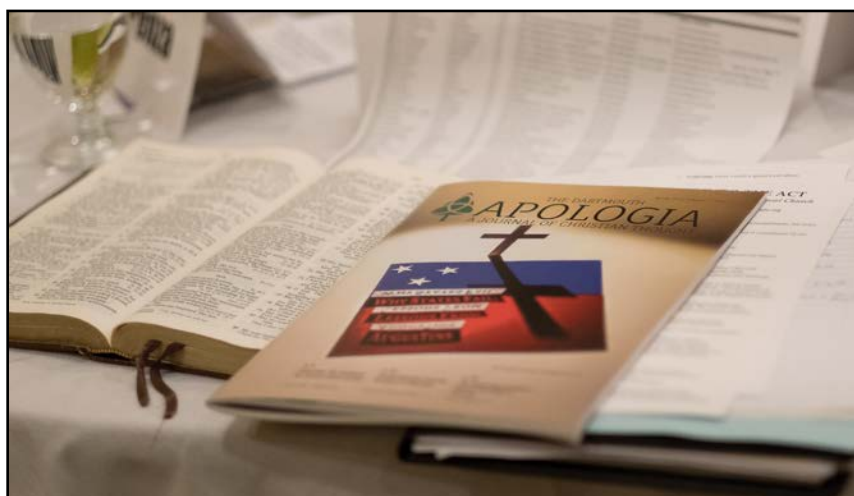
*Christianity Explained*, David Pawson, Ashford: Anchor Recordings, 2014

*Christianity Explored*, Rico Tice and Barry Cooper, Good Book Company, 2005

*Christianity: The Faith That Makes Sense*, Dennis McCallum, Wheaton, Ill: Living Books, 1997

**Evidence For Hope**, Robert Valiant, Redemption Press, 2014

*Exposing Myths About Christianity: A Guide to Answering 145 Viral Lies and Legends*, Jeffrey Burton Russell, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2012







*Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*, Voddie Baucham, Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2015

*Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2005

*Finding Common Ground: How to Communicate with Those Outside the Christian Community While We Still Can*, Tim Downs, Chicago: Moody Press, 1999

**God Is Great, God Is Good: Why Believing in God Is Reasonable and Responsible**, William Lane Craig and Chad V. Meister, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009

*God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally*, Doug Pollock, Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2009

*Handbook of Christian Apologetics Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions*, Peter Kreeft and Ronald Keith Tacelli, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 1994

*Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths Building Bridges to Faith Through Apologetics*, Alister E. McGrath, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010

*Life in the Balance: Biblical Answers for the Issues of Our Day*, Joni Eareckson Tada, Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2010

*Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Sceptics Find Faith*, Alister E. McGrath, London: SPCK Publishing, 2016

**Reason to Believe**, R. C. Sproul, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982

*Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth & Apologetics*, William Lane Craig, Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2009

*Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*, N. T. Wright, New York: HarperOne, 2010

*Socrates in the City: Conversations on "Life, God and Other Small Topics,"* Eric Metaxas, London: Collins, 2011

**The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus**, Lee Strobel, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016

**The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity**, Lee Strobel, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014

*The New Atheists: The Twilight of Reason and the War on Religion*, Tina Beattie, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008

**The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism**, Timothy Keller, Penguin, 2016

**What Good Is God?: In Search of a Faith That Matters**, Philip Yancey, New York: Jericho Books, 2013



**20 Compelling Evidences That God Exists: Discover Why Believing in God Makes so Much Sense**, Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman, RiverOak Publishing, 2007



## BIBLE

*Authority*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992

**Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels**, J. Warner Wallace, David C. Cook, 2013

*More Precious Than Gold: Read the Bible in One or Two Years*, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, South Hamilton, Mass.: The Lausanne Movement, 2008

*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, K. A. Kitchen, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006

*Textual Criticism and Qur'ān Manuscripts*, Keith E. Small, Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2012

*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, F. F. Bruce, Blacksburg, Va: Wilder Publications, 2010

*What Every Christian Needs to Know*, Greg Laurie, Kerygma Pub, 2011

## DOUBT

*The Searchers: A Quest for Faith in the Valley of Doubt*, Joe Loconte, Nashville, Tenn: T. Nelson, 2012

*Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship*, Lesslie Newbigin, London: SPCK Publishing, 1995

## EVIL

*Deliver Us from Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture*, Ravi K. Zacharias, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997

**Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God**, Paul Copan, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011

*Unspeakable: Facing Up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror*, Os Guinness, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005

## IDENTITY

*Beyond Identity: Finding Your Self in the Image and Character of God*, Dick Keyes, Switzerland: Destinée Media, 2012 ([www.destineemedia.com](http://www.destineemedia.com))

*The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, J. Richard Middleton, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005

*The Search for Significance*, Robert S. McGee and Jack Crabtree, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003

*True Heroism in a World of Celebrity Counterfeits*, Dick Keyes, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1995

## JUSTICE

*Good News About Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World*, Gary A. Haugen, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009

*Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, Bryan Stevenson, Random House, 2014

*More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel*, Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice, Nottingham: IVP, 2000

*Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, Debby Irving, Cambridge, Mass: Elephant Room Press, 2014

## POLITICS

*Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices on Political Thought and Action*, J. Budziszewski and David L. Weeks, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006

*God & Government: An Insider's View on the Boundaries between Faith & Politics*, Charles W. Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007

**Legislating Morality: Is It Wise? Is It Legal? Is It Possible?**, Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2003

*The Separation of Church and State: Writings on Fundamental Freedom by America's Founders*, Forrester Church, Boston: Beacon, 2011

## RELATIONSHIPS

*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007

*The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the Twenty-First Century*, Jacqueline Olds and Richard S. Schwartz, Boston: Beacon, 2010

*The Lost Virtue of Happiness: Discovering the Disciplines of the Good Life*, James Porter Moreland and Klaus Dieter Issler, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006

**The Mark of the Christian**, Francis A. Schaeffer, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2006

## RELIGIONS

**Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam**, Timothy C. Tennent, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002

*Muslims and Christians at the Table: Promoting Biblical Understanding Among North American Muslims*, Bruce A. McDowell and Anees Zaka, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999

**Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message**, Ravi K. Zacharias, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000

**Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity**, Nabeel Qureshi, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016





## SCIENCE

*By Design or by Chance?*, Denyse O'Leary, Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2004

*Darwin on Trial*, Phillip E. Johnson and Michael J. Behe, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2010

*Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Michael J. Behe, London: The Free Press, 2006

*How Blind Is the Watchmaker?: Nature's Design & the Limits of Naturalistic Science*, Neil Broom, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2001

*Intelligent Design 101: Leading Experts Explain the Key Issues*, H. Wayne House, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008

*Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*, Stephen C. Meyer, New York: HarperOne, 2009

**The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God**, Lee Strobel and Jane Vogel, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014

*The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1994

## SEX & GENDER

*Conquer Series: The Battle Plan for Purity*, Ted Roberts, West Palm Beach: Kingdomworks Studios, 2013

*EnGendered: God's Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship*, Sam A. Andreades, Weaver Press, 2015

*Feminism and the Bible*, Mardi Keyes, Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1995. Online version updated in 2013: <http://pirate-pastor.blogspot.com/2013/04/feminism-and-bible-by-mardi-keyes-2013.html>

*Love into Light: The Gospel, the Homosexual, and the Church*, Peter Lloyd Hubbard, Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 2015

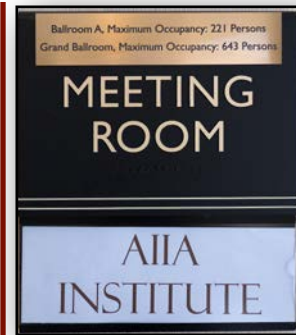
*Pure Desire: How One Man's Triumph Can Help Others Break Free from Sexual Temptation*, Ted Roberts, Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2008

*Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity*, Winner, Lauren F, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006

*Sex and the Soul of a Woman: How God Restores the Beauty of Relationship from the Pain of Regret*, Paula Rinehart, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010

*Surfing for God: Discovering Divine Desire Beneath Sexual Struggle*, Michael John Cusick, Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2012

*The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfillment While Keeping Your Clothes On*, Dawn Eden, Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2006



## SUFFERING

*Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud*, Philip Yancey, Harpercollins Christian Pub., 2015

*Affliction*, Edith Schaeffer, Carlisle: Paternoster Publ, 1996

*Beside Bethesda*, Joni Eareckson Tada, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014

*Grieving a Suicide: A Loved One's Search for Comfort, Answers, and Hope*, Albert Y. Hsu, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2017

*The God I Love: A Lifetime of Walking with Jesus*, Joni Eareckson Tada, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003

*Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, Timothy Keller, New York: Riverhead Books, 2015

## TECHNOLOGY

*From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology*, John Dyer, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011

**How to Be a Christian in a Brave New World**, Joni Eareckson Tada and Nigel M. de S. Cameron, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006

*New Medicine: Life and Death After Hippocrates*, Nigel M. de S. Cameron, London: Bioethics Press, 2001

*Playing God? Facing the Everyday Ethical Dilemmas of Biotechnology*, Charles W. Colson, Nigel M. de S. Cameron, Tracey D. Lawrence, and Prison Fellowship Ministries, The Wilberforce Forum, a division of Prison Fellowship Ministries, 2004

*The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*, Andy Crouch, Baker Books, 2017

## TOLERANCE

*Christ Among Other Gods: A Defense of Christ in an Age of Tolerance*, Erwin W. Lutzer, Moody Press, 2016

**The Beauty of Intolerance: Setting a Generation Free to Know Truth & Love**, Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, Uhrichsville, Ohio: Shiloh Run Press, 2016

*The Intolerance of Tolerance*, D. A. Carson, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013

*The New Tolerance: How a Cultural Movement Threatens to Destroy You, Your Faith, and Your Children*, Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 1998

## URBAN

*The Cat and the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age*, Douglas Hall, Judy Hall and Steve Daman, Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2010

*Urban Apologetics: Why the Gospel Is Good News for the City*, Christopher W. Brooks, Kregel Publications, 2014



## WORLDVIEWS & CULTURE

*Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom & Discernment*, Brian Godawa, Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009

*How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*, James K. A. Smith, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015

**How Now Shall We Live?**, Charles W. Colson and Nancy Pearcey, Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 2004

**Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity**, Nancy Pearcey, Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2008

*Why You Think the Way You Do: The Story of Western Worldviews from Rome to Home*, Glenn S. Sunshine, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009

## ABERRATIONAL TEACHING

**Proper Pursuit of Prosperity: Balancing the Promises of Heaven with the Experiences of Earth**, William E. Cripe, Sr., Tate Pub & Enterprises, 2011

## ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

CRU (campus ministry) <https://www.cru.org/>

GotQuestions.org (website) <http://gotquestions.org>

InterVarsity (campus ministry) <https://intervarsity.org/>

**L'Abri (study center, Massachusetts)** <http://labri.org/mass/index.html>

Navigators (campus ministry) <https://www.navigators.org/Home>

One Minute Apologist (website) <http://www.oneminuteapologist.com/>

**Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics**, an RZIM ministry in Oxford, UK. <https://www.theocca.org/> Graduates are sent to cities around the world where they are ready to help out with apologetics, in partnership with various churches and ministries.

**Ratio Christi** (campus ministry University of Maine at Orono) <https://ratiochristi.org/>

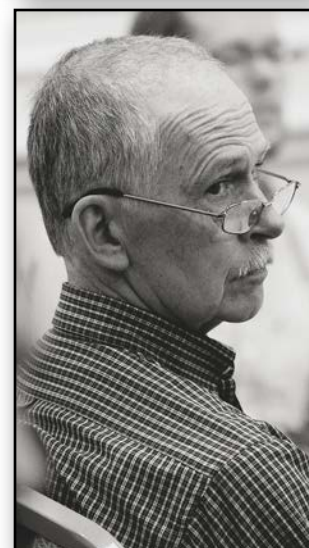
**RZIM** <http://rzimacademy.org/about/>

Search Ministries <http://www.searchministries.org>

**The Toughest Test in College**, by Focus on the Family's TrueU program. <https://vimeo.com/95545783>

The Truth Project. Del Tackett ties world ideas into God's Word. <http://www.thetruthproject.org/>

Understanding Islam, using a DVD series by Nabeel Qureshi. <http://open.biola.edu/collections/apologetics-to-islam>





## ROSTER OF EVENT PARTICIPANTS

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Bob Valiant	Chester	NH	AIIA   Attends Manchester Christian Church
Dale & Betty Morrell	Readfield	ME	Faith Christian Church • Gardiner ME
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Rita Corbin	Dover-Foxcroft	ME	Calvary Chapel Highlands • Dover-Foxcroft ME
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Josiah Stockwell	Winterport	ME	Pilgrim Orthodox Presbyterian • Bangor ME
Aaron Werner	Portland	ME	Cross Church • Portland ME
Steven Walker	Lisbon	NH	Faith Bible Church • Littleton NH
Mike Penza	Holden	MA	Holden Chapel • Holden MA
Mike Olmstead	Portland	ME	Navigators
Chris Viera	Dover-Foxcroft	ME	United Baptist Church • Dover-Foxcroft ME
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Tony Ruschioni	Winchendon	MA	Bethany Bible Church • Winchendon MA
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Jerry Swift	Lebanon	NH	C.S. Lewis Society   Valley Bible Church in VT
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Timothy Frisch	Claremont	NH	Calvary Baptist Church • Claremont NH
Kevin Grant	Waterville	ME	Kennebec Valley Baptist Church • Waterville ME
Peter Derby	North Berwick	ME	New Covenant Baptist Church • N Berwick ME
Jack & Judy Cohn	Newport	RI	Newport Community Church • Newport RI
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Neal Patel	White River Junction	VT	Valley Bible Church

## MAKING THE MOST OF THIS REPORT

A significant amount of God's money and a major investment of time and effort by God's people was required in order to stage this event, and to compile and report on it in this White Paper.

*As a reader, you are now a key component in whether and how that investment will pay off.*

First, obviously, **we hope that reading this report will translate to action in your own church, on your local campus, and in your sphere of influence.**

But then, rather than to dispose of the paper, would you please:

- Set it in a place where you will remember to review it once more in about a month.
- Pass it along to your church leaders, local campus ministry leaders, or denominational leaders who might benefit from it.
- Use it as the basis for a follow-up discussion in your small groups or among your church leaders.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

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### CREDITS

**Steve & Debby Daman:** recording notes at the event; writing, organizing, and compiling extensive data. • **Daryl E. Witmer:** editing and layout. • **Mark McCall:** event photography • and **Bangor Letter Shop** of Bangor, Maine: printing services.

