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—HAROLD J. NETLAND, Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Intercultural Studies and the Naomi A. Fausch Chair of Missions, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“Chad Meister and Norm Geisler have delivered a *tour de force* for apologetics in their work *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith*. Here is a treasure trove of rich apologetical information addressing a myriad of relevant subjects. This collection will fortify the believer in the faith, but it will also serve as an effective evangelistic tool for nonbelievers who are struggling with questions about the Christian faith. For saints and seekers alike *Reasons for Faith* is a must read and an apologetics classic in the making.”

—R. PHILIP (PHIL) ROBERTS, president, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“*Reasons for Faith*, edited by Norm Geisler and Chad Meister, is a handbook for defending the biblical worldview that every pastor should have on his desk and every thoughtful layperson could study with benefit. This is a timely and timeless book.”

—CHUCK COLSON, founder, Prison Fellowship

REASONS *for* FAITH

MAKING A CASE *for the* CHRISTIAN FAITH

Essays in Honor of Bob Passantino and Gretchen Passantino Coburn

NORMAN L. GEISLER & CHAD V. MEISTER

EDITORS



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Foreword

Lee Strobel

AS AN ATHEIST, I THOUGHT it was the worst news I could possibly get: my wife announced that after a season of spiritual investigation, she had decided to become a follower of Jesus. My immediate thought was that divorce was inevitable.

Yet in the ensuing months, I became intrigued by the surprisingly positive changes I observed in Leslie's character and values. Her transformation was so winsome and attractive that when she finally invited me to go to church with her, I decided to comply—at least *once*. And that's where I heard the message of Jesus articulated in a way I could understand for the first time in my life.

Still, I didn't believe it. As a skeptical journalist who had been trained in law, I harbored too many objections. I needed evidence that the Bible is trustworthy, and not a book full of myths and contradictions as I believed at the time. I needed facts to back up the supposed resurrection of Jesus, which I thought was the biggest fable of all. I needed a faith that was internally coherent and consistent with reality. I wasn't a good candidate for emotionalism or wishful thinking. Opinions weren't good enough; I required solid substantiation. I clearly needed "reasons for faith" before I'd embrace any system of spiritual beliefs.

So I launched what turned out to be a nearly two-year investigation of the facts undergirding the Christian faith. I studied cosmology and physics for clues about a Creator. I used historical analysis to check out the New Testament's reliability and claims concerning the resurrection of Jesus. I looked into other world religions to see if they could withstand similar barrages of critical scrutiny. I pondered whether evil and suffering disproved the existence of a loving God.

These are the kinds of issues you'll find explored in this terrific new volume on Christian apologetics. In the pages that follow, some of the most accomplished and thoughtful experts of our day spell out why Christianity

makes so much sense. They back up their conclusions with clarity and logic, writing persuasively and compellingly about the reason for the hope that they have (1 Pet. 3:15).

The writers have much in common. Many of them were influenced by Gretchen and the late Bob Passantino, largely unheralded apologists who have quietly encouraged so many contemporary defenders of the faith. Like the Passantinos, these contributors also share something else: an abiding commitment to pursuing truth, wherever it leads them.

My own investigation led me to an unexpected conclusion on November 8, 1981. Assessing the evidence with as much objectivity as I could muster, I came to believe that Jesus really is the unique Son of God who authenticated his identity by rising from the dead. Nobody else, I realized, could open the door of heaven for me.

I didn't feel a rush of emotion at that instant. Instead, I experienced something even more profound: the rush of reason.

I trust that your own intellect will be expanded by what you'll encounter as you delve deeply into this book. If you're a Christian, it's my hope that you'll finish the last page with an even deeper appreciation for the factual foundation of your faith—and that you'll be freshly equipped to define and defend Christianity as you interact with others.

And if you're an open-minded spiritual seeker . . . well, get ready for a fascinating intellectual and spiritual journey. Perhaps you will find yourself swept up, as I was, in the power of the evidence that points toward a grace-bestowing God. In fact, here's my prayer: that as you honestly consider the contents of this book, you too will experience the rush of reason.

Lee Strobel, author, *The Case for Christ*
and *The Case for the Real Jesus*.

Preface

OUR GOAL FOR THIS BOOK is twofold: first, we wish it to be an effective tool for bolstering the faith of Christians and building the faith of seekers; second, we desire that it honor Bob Passantino and Gretchen Passantino Coburn. They have truly lived out the qualities of a Christian apologist, and it is to them that we dedicate this work.

The Bible makes it clear that as Christians we are to “always be prepared to give an answer” for our faith (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV). Such an answer may take a variety of forms and styles, and it may involve a host of different issues. Nevertheless, the ability to give reasons for faith—solid, rational, and powerful reasons—should be part and parcel of the follower of Jesus Christ. In this book we have included leading Christian apologists, philosophers, and theologians and have covered some of the most important and pressing issues of our day related to giving answers for the Christian faith.

We begin in Part One by examining two questions: “What is apologetics and why do we need it?” These chapters explore the nature of apologetics, its role in contemporary culture, and what it should look like—both in theory and in practice.

Part Two explores cultural and theological issues relevant to defending the faith today. From a careful examination of the essentials of faith, to an analysis of postmodern thinking, to the role of historical theology in apologetics, seven chapters are devoted to these relevant and cutting-edge topics.

Part Three hones in specifically on the defense of Christian theism. Three chapters are dedicated to arguments for the existence of God, one focuses on the enduring problem of evil, another examines recent criticisms of the Bible and Jesus’ deity, and the final chapter takes a fresh look at the resurrection of Jesus.

Part Four explores religious movements such as Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostals, witchcraft, and Satanism. The last chapter sketches the need for apologetics in world missions, in particular where

Hindu-type religious thought (such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and the New Age) is involved.

Finally, a Postscript is included that presents a clear and concise manifesto for Christian apologists. Through nineteen theses, it clarifies the role of apologetics and inspires and challenges Christians to reflect, pray, and act effectively and biblically in our culture.

Providing reasons and evidences for faith, however, is only one aspect of Christian apologetics. The *manner* in which these reasons are presented is just as important as their content, for the same passage that instructs us to be prepared to give reasons for our hope concludes by admonishing us to do this “with gentleness and respect.” In other words, the gospel of Christ should always be presented and defended in a spirit of love. It is this model of apologetics that Bob and Gretchen continually exemplified, combined with their expansive knowledge and inexorable zeal, which set them apart as paragons of apologetics.

Before Bob’s death in 2003, he and Gretchen ministered together for close to thirty years. Through their Answers in Action ministry, they equipped Christians to share and defend their faith and helped countless seekers find faith. They have been widely respected in a variety of fields, including evangelism, apologetics, philosophy, and theology. They have advanced the gospel of Jesus Christ through many means—personal discussions, public lectures, research, radio and television interviews, and a wide variety of publications. Amazingly, they have personally influenced an overwhelming number of the leading Christian apologists of our day, and Gretchen’s ministry is still going strong (see the Answers in Action web site—www.answers.org—for more information).

This book is a labor of love and gratitude for the Passantinos, who have worked tirelessly to shine as beacons of light and hope to Christians and seekers of all persuasions. We are thankful to the contributors of this volume for their outstanding work and their passion for evangelism and apologetics. We also wish to thank Eric Pement for his editorial work on several of the chapters and Lanny Wilson for his editorial support throughout the development of this project.

Our hope is that this work advances the gospel of Jesus Christ and inspires more apologists like the Passantinos to carry his torch and influence the world for his kingdom.

Chad V. Meister
Norman L. Geisler

PART ONE

What Is Apologetics and
Why Do We Need It?



CHAPTER ONE

An Apologetic for Apologetics

Mark Mittelberg

I'D *LIKE* TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN, but I still have a few questions that are hanging me up," said John Swift, a fast-talking, hard-hitting commercial banker who worked in downtown Chicago.

"Let's talk about whatever is holding you back," I replied to John, whom I had just sat down to meet with for the first time at the request of Ernie, a seeker small group leader from our church who had been dealing with John's list of spiritual doubts and objections for some time. "But you know you don't need to have an answer to every question in order to become a Christian."

"I realize that," John replied, "but if I'm reading you guys right, my main question deals with something you all think is a pretty big deal."

"Well, maybe. What is it?" I responded.

Emphatically, John shot back, "I don't believe in the resurrection of Christ!"

At this point I had to concede that, yes, that issue is a pretty big deal to us in the church. "I'll admit, John, that when I went to seminary, the resurrection of Christ was under the heading labeled BIGGIES. That's because the Bible clearly teaches that this is one of the truths that is essential for someone to believe in order to become a true follower of Christ. But I'm curious, why don't you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?"

"It just doesn't make sense to me that a dead person could come back to life. Everything I've ever seen supports the fact that dead people just stay in the grave, and their bodies rot there—or get eaten by wild dogs! Why should I believe it was any different for Jesus?"

It was a great question. As a friend of mine likes to say, "The last time I checked, the death rate was still hovering at right around 100 percent!" So why

should we put our faith in a claim that contradicts everything we've ever seen or experienced related to people dying and then staying in their graves?

What would you say to a friend who challenged you with this kind of a question? Many Christians would simply reply, "Well, you have to take it on faith!" Or "The Bible says it's true, and that settles it. You just have to take God at his word!" Or some would just walk away and assume that the person was destined for judgment, unable to see the truth that God has revealed to his true followers. So why even try?

But the Bible tells us we should do whatever it takes to be ready to give a clear and thoughtful response. First Peter 3:15 says, "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 The original Greek word that is translated "answer" in that verse is *apologia*, which means "a speech of defense." It's from this that we get our term *apologetics*, which is a reasoned defense of our faith.

So here's the deal: *all* of us who are followers of Christ are told in this verse to be ready to give good answers to back up our faith. This is not just for professional pastors, theologians, or seminary professors. But let's be honest: none of us ever feels completely up to the task! That's why it's so important to read and study books like this one, which is designed to help us do what the verse commands: "be prepared . . ."

Please don't misunderstand. I don't think evidence or reason alone leads people into God's family. I agree with the age-old cliché that says, "You can't argue people into heaven." But I *do* believe, based on both Scripture and experience, that good arguments, logic, and evidence are used by God's Spirit to help clear the path of intellectual roadblocks so guys like John Swift and countless others can take the message seriously and eventually decide to follow the one who died to pay for our sins and rose to give us new life. As it's often stated, apologetics is the handmaiden to evangelism. It serves, when appropriately applied, the greater purposes of the gospel and of the Christian mission to "go into all the world and make disciples."

So you might wonder, what ended up happening in my conversation with John? Well, rather than initially presenting him with evidence and reasons for the resurrection of Christ, I decided to first ask him what he'd been doing to study this matter for himself.

"Mostly," he replied, "I've just read and listened to the scholars who are

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations in this chapter are taken from the New International Version.

part of something called The Jesus Seminar—and those guys have all kinds of negative things to say about the idea of Jesus rising from the dead!”

“I’m very aware of that,” I said with more of an impatient tone than I’d intended, “but have you read any of the great books that present the actual historical evidence for the resurrection—like the writings of Norman Geisler, Josh McDowell, or Gary Habermas?”

“Honestly, Mark, I don’t know about any of those books, and I’ve never heard anything that sounded like real evidence for Jesus’ resurrection. Maybe you can fill me in a bit?”

“I’d love to,” I replied as we began an hour-plus discussion about some of the key points of evidence. The more we talked, the more encouraged I was by John’s receptivity, while being amazed and frustrated that such vitally important information—which has been around for some two thousand years—was so completely unknown to this inquisitive spiritual seeker.

The minutes flew by as we talked, and soon we were just about out of time. “Before you go,” I said to John, “I’d like to loan you a book I recently picked up that I think will help deepen your understanding of the overwhelming amount of evidence that supports the resurrection of Christ.” As I handed him my brand-new copy of *Jesus Under Fire*, edited by apologists Michael Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, I added, “I’m sure the whole book would be helpful to you, but I’d especially like to encourage you to read through the chapter titled ‘Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?’ by William Lane Craig—I think it will be particularly helpful to you.”

Then I said one more thing that surprised even me. “John, I know you’re a businessman who relates to goals and challenges. So let me urge you to read that chapter right away and to look further at some of the books I’ve been telling you about so you can see that the historical evidence strongly supports the resurrection of Jesus. Then, assuming you find this to be true, I want to challenge you to become a Christian before Easter, which is only a month away. That way you can finally celebrate the holiday for its real meaning!”

The look of intensity in John’s eyes told me he was taking my words seriously. It wasn’t more than a couple weeks later that he sent my book back with a note informing me that he’d already combed through the chapter by Bill Craig several times, then read the entire book, and had already purchased copies for himself and a few friends with similar questions! And it was only about two weeks after that, while I was on a speaking trip to Australia, that I phoned in one night to get my voice mails and heard a message from Ernie, John’s seeker small group leader, telling me with great excitement that John had trusted in Christ just a few days before Easter!

When I got back home I called John to congratulate and encourage him—and only a few months later I had the privilege of baptizing him in the pond by our church. What a joy that was, and what a thrill it has been to see him grow in his faith ever since that time, even to this day!

So why is it so important that you and I be able to give an *apologia*—an answer or reason for our faith? Let's discuss two simple responses to that question: the love of people and the love of God.

THE LOVE OF PEOPLE

The story of John Swift is just one of many I could tell to illustrate the importance and potential impact of our being ready to engage in effective apologetics. Countless other people have been helped in similar ways, including my close friend and ministry partner, Lee Strobel, who himself had been an atheist who needed to see evidence that Christianity made sense and was based on facts before he was ready to put his trust in Christ. Today he's helping many others discover what he learned—that truth really is on the side of our faith.

Lee tells the story of another skeptic, a Harvard-educated lawyer from the Los Angeles area who had resisted Jesus and his teachings for his entire life. The man's brother was a Christian who prayed for him daily and did his best to reach out to him with the gospel for more than forty-eight years. His brother tried everything he could think of, including finally giving him a copy of Strobel's classic book *The Case for Christ*. He ignored the book for some time, until he was diagnosed with cancer and realized he didn't have long to live. He read it on his deathbed and, having finally seen and understood the evidence that backs up the faith, prayed and received the forgiveness and leadership of Christ.

Another example came one time when Lee and I did an outreach event like we've done together in ministry for years—a free-for-all Q & A in which we invite Christians to bring all of their friends who have questions, doubts, and objections about our faith. We usually promote these events as Firing Lines, and we're the ones under fire!

The format is simple: after a brief introduction from one of us, we open up the house microphones for anyone who would like to throw a spiritual question or challenge at us, no holds barred. We've found that if we do this while treating them with respect—including those we don't agree with—they tend to respect us as well, and we have some great interactions!

That particular evening we were almost ready to end the meeting when

I decided to take one more question. A man near the front of the room spoke up and said he'd heard that early Christian teachings were actually based on ancient pagan mystery religions and wondered what we thought. I sensed that the man was asking this question not just out of mild curiosity but with a deep concern to know what was true.

Now, the story behind the story was that I knew that in the days prior to this Lee had felt compelled to do some extra study on that very question, just in case it might come up—and here it was, the last one of the evening! So, trying to sound casual, I turned and said, “Lee, would you like to take a shot at that one?” Well, Lee, loaded for bear, pulled both triggers of the intellectual shotgun and gave an answer that was so clear, so powerful, and so thorough that there was not a shred of confusion or ambiguity left when he was finished. Christianity, he made abundantly clear, did *not* borrow from any mystery religions, though sometimes the reverse may have been true!

We found out later that this was the last question holding this man up in his spiritual journey and that afterward he prayed to give his life to Christ!

Another time I met with a man who had been visiting our church and had a lot of spiritual questions. After responding to his issues and objections for a couple of hours he finally leaned back in his chair, looked me in the eye, and said, “I guess you’ve answered all of my questions . . . so *now* what do I do?” I said, “Well, you talk to God, acknowledge that you now know these things are true, and ask him to forgive your sins and to begin to lead your life. Are you ready to do that?” He was, so we prayed together right then and there, and today he’s a brother in Christ.

I tell these multiple stories to encourage and inspire us to remember that apologetics—the study of reasons for our faith—is not for the mere accumulation of knowledge. It’s to give us the information we need to lovingly serve and help people for whom Jesus died and whom he sent us to reach.

The most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son . . .” So we should be ready to explain who that Son of God is and be able to articulate and defend the truth of his unique claims, mission, and work on our behalf, so that the much-loved people of this world will be able to “believe in him [and] not perish but have eternal life.” This is, again, what the apostle Peter admonished us to do when he said to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks,” and it’s what the apostle Paul echoed when he challenged us in Colossians 4:5 to “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”

So the Bible says over and over that the motivation for and the focus of

our apologetic efforts should be *people*—men, women, and children who matter deeply to the Father.

Let me pass on some helpful advice I received years ago from two of my spiritual mentors (to whom this book is dedicated), the late Bob Passantino and his wife, Gretchen. It was this: if you want to become a well-rounded and effective Christian apologist, then don't just read books and spend all of your time hanging out with like-minded believers. Get out there and actually *talk with real human beings* who have questions and objections. Try out the truths you've been learning in dialogue with them. Put your answers into play with some folks who will actually benefit from them!

Bob and Gretchen modeled this value together for decades, and I'll never forget the stories we heard at Bob's funeral from people who told of how he had been willing to interact with them for hours on end—sometimes even talking all night long—as he listened to their questions and gently but persistently challenged them with the claims of the Christian faith. As a result, many of them had entrusted their lives and eternities to Christ based on what they had learned and were therefore able to stand and speak that day as members of God's family.

When I was in graduate school I knew two fellow philosophy of religion students who loved God but who debated me and others constantly about whether apologetic arguments really do any good for nonbelievers. They said that because non-Christians start with non-Christian presuppositions, they could never rationally “get to God from non-God.” I could never understand why guys who really believed that would spend so much time studying apologetics anyway, but I spent hours talking to them in the effort to try to understand their point of view—and them!

Finally, in exasperation, I asked these friends individually to tell me candidly whether their theories about what those outside of the Christian faith could and could not understand were based on their books and study alone or on actual conversations with people who really didn't seem able to access the information they were trying to communicate to them. Both of these guys, at separate times and locations, hung their heads and acknowledged what I'd suspected—that, no, they had never really talked to any non-Christians to try out their answers on them. They'd been so convinced by certain professors and books that it wouldn't do any good, they hadn't even tried! As I heard this I couldn't help thinking about how many people they could have helped but didn't—people like John Swift and Lee Strobel.

A couple years later, after one of these friends had gone into a program

to get his doctorate in philosophy, I had the chance to get together with him to catch up a bit. When I asked him how his classes at the university were going, he said his studies were progressing pretty well. But then he somewhat sheepishly admitted that when his faith was challenged by his atheistic professors, “it seems to make a lot of sense to actually give them reasons and answers for what we believe.”

Somehow being around people with genuine spiritual doubts and confusion helps us regain our bearings and reminds us of our mission: to bring the truths of the gospel to bear so that real people—people in our families and in our neighborhoods, people we know at work or at school, people who are like us as well as those who are very different from us, people on the other side of the town, the county, the country, and the world—will believe and receive Christ.

Before I move past the topic of what apologetics does for people, let me encourage you with a few thoughts on what studying and telling others about the evidence and logic behind our faith does for *us* as believers:

- It helps us grow in understanding our own beliefs as we learn about the evidence, the Bible, and other belief systems in the effort to help our friends move toward Christ.
- It gives us clarity on what we believe, much as a final test in school helps us pull together all that we’ve learned—or should have learned—during the semester.
- It gives us confidence concerning why we believe what we believe as our faith stands up to scrutiny and challenges.
- It gives us spiritual stability, preventing us from being “tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching . . .” (Eph. 4:14).
- It matures us in our faith and helps shape us for leadership in the church as ones who can “encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9).
- It expands our capacity to “love . . . God . . . with all [our] mind . . .” (Matt. 22:37).

So you see that apologetics is good for people in general—both for the recipients of the information as well as for us, the ones who study the evidence and share what we learn.

THE LOVE OF GOD

While it’s clear that giving reasons for our faith serves and blesses people, it’s also true that it serves and honors God. Think about this passage from Psalm 19:1:

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

If God went to all of the effort of creating a universe spectacular enough that it would declare his glory and then went through the process of revealing this fact to David and then saw to it that David wrote it down accurately and finally made sure that the biblical record was preserved for thousands of years so we would still have his message today, then don't you think we should at least *declare* that "the heavens declare the glory of God" to everyone who will listen? If so, then you're dangerously close to utilizing a couple of theistic and scientific arguments as apologetic tools for evangelism! Congratulations! We honor God by declaring what he declares and letting his truth impact people as it will.

If God is the God of truth, as we know he is, then we honor him whenever we defend his truth, not just to the already convinced, but also to people in "all nations," as Jesus said it in Matthew 28. And Jesus modeled this for us in many ways. He pointed to fulfilled prophecies as evidence for his divine identity; he did miracles in full view of his followers and detractors alike, later holding out those miracles as evidence to help people believe his claims; and he ultimately pointed to his greatest miracle, his own resurrection, as the supreme proof that he was indeed the Son of God. Surely we, likewise, honor him and the Father by pointing people to his fulfillment of the prophecies, his divine miracles, and his resurrection from the dead as we seek to move them toward him as their forgiver and leader!

The apostle Paul also honored God by living this value out in a powerful way. He tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:4–5: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Bold and powerful words from a first-rate, first-century, master apologist!

Further, Paul said in Philippians 1:7 that he was active in "defending and confirming the gospel." He didn't just proclaim the message—he also presented reasons why people should believe it. And it was Paul who told Titus that leaders in the church should be able, as the norm, to "refute those who oppose" the message (Titus 1:9). He also said in 2 Corinthians 5:11 that he was trying to persuade people to follow Christ because, as he says a few verses later, "Christ's love compels us." And he was described in Acts 28:23 as spending the last days of his life in Rome working from morning

until evening as he “tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.” And the very next verse reports that “some were convinced by what he said.”

Throughout church history, starting with the apostles, then the early church fathers, and all the way through the centuries to today, courageous believers have been willing to take risks for the sake of the gospel as they not only declared the Christian message but also defined and defended it. Ignatius, for example, was a bishop of the church in Antioch around the turn of the first century. He was persecuted for his faith and ended up being martyred for Christ. But on the way to his execution he wrote letters that emphasized that Jesus “really and truly” was crucified for our sins, that he rose again on the third day, and that this proved conclusively that he was the Son of God as he claimed. This was not just the stuff of catechism or Sunday school classes for those who already believed; it was true truth that was available for everyone who was willing to listen. Ignatius didn’t care whether it was the “pre-Christian” or the “post-Christian” era, or whether he was living in premodern, modern, or postmodern times—he simply knew that what he believed was true and that everyone needed to hear it because it represented *reality*.

We must have the same bold and tenacious attitude. Yes, the latter part of 1 Peter 3:15 tells us we must communicate with “gentleness and respect,” and that’s important. But it doesn’t detract from the urgency we need as we do our best to proclaim the truth of Christ clearly and compellingly to a lost and dying generation.

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ . . . And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:37–39). There are, I’m sure, many ways we can express this. But let me urge you to show your love to God and to the people he created and whom he “wants . . . to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4) by presenting them with the message of our Christian faith and then by being ready to compellingly and winsomely give them reasons to believe.

People like Don Hart will thank you. Like John Swift, he came to me with questions. He had attended an event at our church where a Jewish businessman described his investigation of the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. That businessman not only ended up becoming a believer but also a Christian author and pastor, and now Don was confused. Could these messianic prophecies really point toward Jesus of Nazareth? Could he himself, a Jewish man, really become a follower of Jesus too?

I began to meet with Don to talk about his questions and concerns, and we had some great conversations over the months that followed. Along the way he challenged pretty much everything and hit me with some tough objections to the faith. But he also listened intently and did his homework when I asked him to read something for further study. And over time I saw him begin to open up, ever so slowly, until one day he was finally ready. Then, with great joy and anticipation, he prayed to receive Jesus as his Messiah and Savior.

Since that day Don has been living an adventure. Though already in his fifties at the time, he enrolled in a Master's program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he grew rapidly in his knowledge of theology and the Bible. A couple years later he graduated, and today he works as a biblical counselor at a counseling center where he encourages people every day in their spiritual development. And just today I called Don, whom I had not spoken to for years. After catching up a bit I asked him a simple question: "How important would you say apologetics is in our world today?"

"Absolutely critical" were the first words that shot out of Don's mouth. Then, apparently wanting to make sure I really got it, he said it again before going on in rapid-fire, staccato speech: "Absolutely critical! I mean, if you don't have a means of being able to answer questions—like the Ethiopian eunuch who said to Philip, 'How will I understand without someone teaching me?' . . . How would I support my beliefs? How would I know with conviction that something is true? And how would I help someone decide—"

And Don went on faster than I could write! I'd uncorked a veritable volcano! Here he was, a man who had been reached through an apologetics outreach event I had hosted, helped by apologetic answers I had given him, and taught through apologetics books I had loaned to him, and now he was getting all carried away on the phone giving *me* a passion-filled apologetic for apologetics! *I loved it!* And I hope you are encouraged by it too.

It's people like Don Hart who motivate me. And John Swift and Lee Strobel and many others. How about you? God wants to use *you* to reach people in your circles who are spiritually confused like those guys were. So take it seriously and get ready. Read on through the following chapters, written by some of the greatest apologists of our time, and let God fan the flames of your desire to help your friends find and follow Christ.