

## The Defense of the Gospel

We think of the apostle Paul as a great preacher, missionary, and church planter—and he was all of those things. But Paul described his own calling this way: “I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:16).

The defense of the gospel—the discipline known as apologetics—has fallen on hard times in our generation. Most Christians think of it as a philosophical exercise rather than (as Paul saw it) a vital application of biblical doctrine. Some think it’s a discipline best relegated to the academic arena, handled only by specialists who have attained advanced degrees, as if it should be kept out of the hands of the laity or the life of the local church. Some insist that contextualization, not apologetics, is the most effective way to advance the kingdom of Christ in a hostile culture.

Cliff McManis rightly understands that biblical apologetics is an exegetical, theological, and pastoral duty. Indeed, at the most basic level, it is every believer’s duty to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). That may be the most succinct biblical description of Christian apologetics.

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