BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

GROUP LEADER GUIDE





APOLOGETICS SERIES: BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

Leader Guide: GROUP STUDY 1: UNSHAKABLE

"Confident Conversations: A Biblical Case for Apologetics" A 5-Week Group Experience that parallels the Sunday Message series at Rock Church: August 10-September 7

Purpose:

To equip believers—especially the next generation—to defend their faith with truth, love, and confidence in a skeptical culture, and take Next Steps on the Discipleship Pathway. **Love and Truth** shows the *tone and heart* behind the study and sharing what is learned in this series.

Group Time Format:

- Each week's lesson includes: **Lesson Overview, Icebreaker, Scripture/Teaching, Group Discussion, Personal Reflection, Next Steps, and Group Prayer**
- Pacing:
    - Icebreaker – 5-7 min
    - Scripture Reflection – 10 min
    - Teaching – 30 min
    - Group Discussion – 10 min
    - Personal Reflection - 5-7 min
    - Next Steps and Prayer – 10 min

August 10: Sermon 1 - "Unshakeable": Apologetic Matters shows the *need* for apologetics.

August 17: Sermon 2 - "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" reveals the two ways of discovering truth.

August 24: Sermon 3 "Why Apologetics Matters": Answering claims not to study apologetics.

August 31: Sermon 4 'Equipped for Every Good Work: The Fruit of Apologetics' reveals three reasons to study apologetics: Discipleship, Cultural Engagement, and Evangelism.

Sept 7: Sermon 5 - "The Heart of Apologetics: truth in love"

Group Leading Tips:

- Should be 60–75 minutes per week, with flexibility for deeper discussions
- Prioritize engagement—real doubts, real answers, real conversation
- Affirm curiosity; don't rush past doubts, and balance truth-telling with compassion
- Celebrate every attempt at gospel conversations, even imperfect ones
- Model humility—"I don't know" is okay, but commit to finding answers

WEEK 1: Unshakable

Why Apologetics Matters: Truth That Strengthens Faith

🧭 Lesson Overview:

Key Verse: 1 Peter 3:15-16: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear…”

Sunday Message: This message introduces apologetics as the God-ordained means of building confidence in Scripture and engaging the world with conviction. Apologetics is not about winning arguments but about standing firm in truth and offering hope with humility.

Big Idea: Christians are called to be ready, respectful, and rooted in truth when responding to skepticism.

Real Life Connection: Sets the foundation by showing why apologetics is necessary for today’s skeptical and confused culture.

🧊 Icebreaker

> ❓ *When was the last time someone challenged your faith or beliefs? How did you respond?*

📖 Scripture and Reflection

Read: 1 Peter 3:15–16
Reflect and Discuss:

- What does it mean to “sanctify the Lord in your hearts”?
- Why does Peter emphasize giving a defense “with meekness and fear”?
- What does this say about **how** we engage, not just what we say?

📚 Teaching: Apologetics Activity: “Responding to Culture”

Break into pairs or groups and respond to 2–3 common objections (leaders assign based on the objection chart below). Read the associated verse(s) and prepare a one-minute biblical response using Scripture. Once complete, come back together as a group to discuss. If short on time, assign fewer objections. Encourage creativity, clarity, and Scripture in their 1-minute answers, affirm strong points, and clarify unclear ones.

Apologetics Objections Quick Reference Chart:

#	Objection	Biblical Response	Verse(s)
1	Faith is for the weak-minded.	God planted eternity in every heart.	Ecclesiastes 3:11
2	Big Bang proves no God.	God created the heavens and the earth.	Genesis 1:1
3	Christianity is blind faith.	Faith comes by hearing the Word.	Romans 10:17
4	Truth is relative.	Jesus is the truth.	John 14:6; John 18:38
5	Fossils prove we came from apes.	We're made in God's image.	Genesis 1:26
6	Dinosaurs disprove the Bible.	Behemoth is described in Job.	Job 40:15-17
7	No evidence of a global flood.	God's covenant and the rainbow.	Genesis 9:13–15
8	Good without God.	None righteous on their own.	Psalm 14:3; Philippians 3:9
9	The universe is 14 billion years old.	God's creation was good & purposeful.	Genesis 1:31
10	The Bible is full of errors.	All Scripture is God-breathed.	2 Timothy 3:16-17

11	All religions teach the same God.	Only through Jesus.	John 14:6
12	All religions lead to the same place.	Salvation is only in Jesus.	Acts 4:12
13	Atheists only believe in proof.	Faith is evidence of the unseen.	Hebrews 11:1
14	Why is there evil and suffering?	Evil flows from the human heart.	Matthew 15:19
15	Christianity denies love/freedom.	Our bodies belong to God.	1 Corinthians 6:1820
16	The Bible promotes slavery.	Kidnapping condemned; dignity upheld.	Exodus 21:16
17	No outside evidence for Jesus.	Eyewitnesses saw His majesty.	2 Peter 1:16
18	Jesus never claimed to be God.	He clearly did.	John 10:30-33
19	Resurrection is a myth.	Seen by 500+ witnesses.	1 Corinthians 15:3–6
20	God should prove Himself.	Creation & resurrection already do.	Luke 16:31; Romans 1:20

💬 Group Discussion

- Which objection have you heard most?
- Which was hardest to respond to?
- How does apologetics strengthen your faith?
- How does our **tone** affect our witness?

✏️ Personal Reflection

Write down one objection you struggle with. Then write a 2–3 sentence biblical response.

📦 Next Steps: “Defend One, Love Many”

Identify one person who has questions about faith. Ask God for an open door to engage them in a loving conversation this week. Invite them to church or to attend LIFE Class with you.

🙏 Close in Prayer

Ask God to:

- Strengthen your boldness with humility.
- Grow your understanding of Scripture.
- Bring divine appointments for gospel conversations.

WEEK 2: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

Truth That Stands Trial: "How Do You Know It's True?"

🧭 Lesson Overview

Key Verse: Luke 1:1-4 "It seemed good to me also… to write… an orderly account… that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

Sunday Message: There are two methods of discovering truth, the scientific method and the legal evidential method. Because we will apply each of these methods throughout this series, it is critical to understand how they work.

The message will focus on the legal evidential method to reveal confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The structure integrates courtroom logic with biblical truth to demonstrate that belief in the resurrection is not blind faith, but a reasonable verdict based on compelling evidence.

Big Idea: The resurrection is supported by strong legal and historical evidence, not blind faith.

Real Life Connection: Using courtroom standards of evidence, this lesson builds a confident, evidential faith in the truth of Jesus' resurrection.

🧊 Icebreaker

❓ *When you hear "faith," do you think of facts, feelings, or something else?*

❓ *"Did God open a door for you to lovingly defend your hope in Christ last week?"*

📖 Scripture and Reflection

Read: Luke 1:1–4

Reflect and Discuss:

- When you hear the word "faith," do you think of something based on evidence, or something emotional or blind?
- Is Biblical faith rooted in real historical events or feelings?
- What is beautiful about order and certainty?

📚 Teaching: Two Ways to Discover Truth

- **Scientific Method** – Great for physical laws, limited for one-time events like resurrection.
    - Observable, repeatable, testable
    - Works for physical laws (e.g., gravity), not one-time historical events.
    - Why can't science alone confirm the resurrection? Because we cannot repeat it!

- **Legal Evidential Method** – Used in courtrooms; based on testimony, documents, and circumstantial evidence.
    - Based on testimonies, physical evidence, and written records
    - Used to confirm one-time historical events like trials or ancient wars

We'll examine the resurrection like jurors in a court of law.

5 Legal Standards of Evidence, as applied to the Resurrection

1. **Reasonable Suspicion** – Acts 17:31 "He has given assurance… by raising Him from the dead."

   Why investigate the resurrection?

   →Billions of believers, radical transformation, historic claims

   ❓ What makes the resurrection worth serious attention?

2. **Probable Cause** – Matthew 28:6 "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said."

   The tomb was empty. Eyewitnesses claimed to see Him.

   ❓ If Jesus didn't rise, why didn't His enemies produce a body?

3. **Preponderance of Evidence** – 1 Corinthians 15:6 "He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once…"

   Multiple eyewitnesses

   Women as first witnesses (culturally unlikely if fabricated)

   Enemy testimony: Guards bribed (Matt. 28:12–13)

   ❓ Which parts of this would be persuasive in court today?

4. **Clear and Convincing Evidence** – 2 Peter 1:16 "We did not follow cunningly devised fables…"

   Archaeological finds (e.g., Pool of Bethesda)

   Manuscripts (Dead Sea Scrolls, Isaiah 53)

   Nazareth Inscription – shows Rome responded to resurrection rumors

   ❓ Why does geography, manuscript integrity, and reaction matter?

5. **Beyond a Reasonable Doubt** – Romans 1:4 "[Jesus] was declared to be the Son of God… by the resurrection."

   Disciples had nothing to gain—only persecution and death

   No plausible alternate explanation:

      Swoon theory? Romans were expert executioners.

      Stolen body? Who dies for a lie?

      Hallucinations? Groups don't share identical visions.

MODERN HISTORICAL SUPPORT - Quote from Bart Ehrman (agnostic scholar): "Some of Jesus' disciples claimed to have seen him alive after his death... That's just a historical fact." 📖
Acts 1:3 – "To whom He also presented Himself alive… by many infallible proofs…"

💬 Group Discussion

- Why does it matter that even skeptics agree on parts of the resurrection story?
- Which type of evidence stood out most to you and why?
- How can you grow in confidence that your faith is rooted in truth?
- How would you explain this to a non-Christian, and who needs to hear this evidence from you?

✏️ Personal Reflection

1. Written Testimony – Scripture
2. Physical Exhibits – Tombs, cities, manuscripts
3. Oral Testimony – Eyewitnesses and your own story!

What makes your personal testimony powerful evidence for Christ today?

📦 Next Steps: “Be a Juror, Then a Witness”

Thinker: Weigh the evidence like a juror
Believer: Live like the resurrection really happened
Witness: Be ready to testify
REACH YOUR VERDICT
The resurrection is not a legend—it’s legally credible.
Courts don’t require 100% certainty—only beyond a reasonable doubt.
What will you do with the evidence?

Weigh the evidence like a juror. Then testify—share with someone why you believe Jesus rose. Explore Rock University classes where you can continue to grow in your knowledge and understanding.

🙏 Close in Prayer

Ask God to:

- Strengthen your conviction and understanding of the truth.
- Grow your confidence in scripture and sharing with others.
- Bring divine appointments for gospel conversations.

WEEK 3: Why Apologetics Matters

The Reason for Apologetics

🧭 Lesson Overview

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...”

Sunday Message: This message dismantles the false belief that apologetics is unloving or unnecessary. Scripture repeatedly commands believers to engage with false ideas and defend the truth—not just be nice.

Big Idea: Apologetics is not just for scholars or debates—it’s a biblical, Spirit-led act of love that removes obstacles to faith and points people to Jesus. Scripture calls every believer to give reasoned, respectful responses rooted in truth

Real Life Connection: Apologetics isn’t optional—it’s biblical. Our defense of the faith must be intentional and rooted in Scripture.

🧊 Icebreaker

❓ *Have you ever been asked a tough question about your faith? What was it—and how did you respond?*

📖 Scripture and Reflection

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 and 1 Peter 3:15
Reflect and Discuss:

- What does this verse teach us about both what we say and how we say it?
- Why is gentleness and respect just as important as truth in apologetics?
- If Truth + Tone = Biblical Defense, how is Apologetics not arguing but removing roadblocks to faith?

📚 Teaching: Why We Defend the Faith Activity

Break into pairs or groups and respond to 2–3 common objections (leaders assign based on the objection chart below). Read the associated verse(s) and prepare a one-minute biblical response using Scripture. Once complete, come back together as a group to discuss. If short

on time, assign fewer objections. Encourage creativity, clarity, and Scripture in their 1-minute answers, affirm strong points, and clarify unclear ones.

Common Objections to Apologetics Chart, and the Biblical Truth:

#	Objection	Truth	Verse(s)
1	We don't need to defend God—He can defend Himself.	Apologetics helps people understand God, not protect Him.	1 Peter 3:15
2	Apologetics is too intellectual.	Loving God includes loving Him with our minds.	Mark 12:30; Romans 12:2
3	Faith means not questioning.	Faith is trust grounded in evidence.	Hebrews 11:1
4	Jesus didn't do apologetics.	Jesus reasoned from Scripture and answered objections.	Matthew 22:29
5	Only scholars need apologetics.	Every believer should be ready.	Jude 1:3
6	Only the Holy Spirit can change hearts.	Apologetics is one tool the Spirit uses.	Acts 17:2–4
7	It causes arguments, not conversions.	Done with humility, apologetics builds bridges.	2 Timothy 2:24–25
8	Just preach the gospel—don't debate.	The apostles reasoned and preached.	Acts 17:17
9	It reduces faith to logic.	Faith includes both heart and mind.	Isaiah 1:18
10	Apologetics distracts from loving people.	Removing doubts is a loving act.	Colossians 4:5–6

💬 Group Discussion

- Which objection did you relate to most?
- What new insight or Scripture encouraged you?
- What can you do this week to better prepare to defend your faith?

✏️ Personal Reflection

Write down the objection you fear being asked most. Create a short response using Scripture. Practice it with someone you trust.

📦 Next Steps: “Prepare One Answer”

Pick one common objection and memorize your biblical response. Pray for a chance to share it this week. Attend Healing Ministry or sign up to attend an Encounter. The last one of 2025 is on September 20th.

🙏 Close in Prayer

Jude 1:3 – "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Ask God to:

- Give you courage to speak and wisdom to respond
- Help you remove obstacles to faith in others’ lives
- Use your words to build bridges, not walls

WEEK 4: Equipped for Every Good Work

The Fruit of Apologetics

🧭 Lesson Overview

Key Verse: Acts 17:16–32 - *these verses recount Paul's experience in Athens, where he encountered widespread idolatry and engaged in discussions about the Christian faith, particularly focusing on the concept of the "unknown God" and the resurrection. Paul's sermon on the Areopagus, where he addressed the Athenians, highlighted God's creation, sovereignty, and the need for repentance.*

Sunday Message: We want to equip believers to reason, relate, and reach others with the gospel in today's culture. The study of apologetics has benefits in three areas of our Christian walk. It is a powerful tool for Discipleship as it deepens our conviction of the truth of the Word and the existence of God. Being more confident in the veracity of the Word, increases our ability to engage in evangelism and sharing the gospel.

Big Idea: Paul's engagement in Athens offers a powerful model for engaging culture with truth, reason, and gospel clarity. It reveals how to confront idols with love and lead seekers to Jesus without compromising the message.

Real Life Connection: Apologetics bears fruit in discipleship, cultural engagement, and evangelism—just like Paul in Athens. Learning how to defend our faith also increases our ability to engage culture and its anti–Christian views.

🧊 Icebreaker

❓ *What's one modern "idol" that seems to be worshiped in our culture today? How do people respond when it's challenged?*

📖 Scripture and Reflection

Read: Acts 17:16–32

📚 Teaching: Discipleship, Cultural Engagement, and Evangelism

Part 1 – Discipleship: Be Rooted in a Reasonable Faith

Acts 17:16–21

Summary: Paul is troubled by idol worship but doesn't retreat. He reasons daily with Jews and philosophers. His discipleship is active, informed, and public.

Reflect and Discuss:

- Why was Paul “provoked” in his spirit by the idolatry? Should we feel the same?
- What does Paul’s approach to reasoning daily teach us about true discipleship?
- In what ways can we prepare ourselves to reason about our faith today?
- How can we avoid reacting with anger or fear when we see false beliefs around us?

Part 2 – Cultural Engagement: Speak Their Language

Acts 17:22–28

Summary: Paul respectfully addresses the Athenians’ spiritual hunger. He uses their altar to an “Unknown God” and quotes their poets, building a bridge to truth.

Reflect and Discuss:

- What stands out about how Paul begins his message?
- What are some "modern idols" or "unknown gods" today? (fame, success, science, identity)
- What are today’s cultural references that can be used to point to Jesus?
- How can we speak into culture with both courage and humility?

Part 3 – Evangelism: Lead Them to Christ

Acts 17:29–32

Summary: Paul moves from cultural discussion to gospel truth. He calls for repentance, warns of judgment, and proclaims Jesus’ resurrection. The responses vary: mockery, curiosity, belief.

Reflect and Discuss:

- Why is repentance such a necessary part of the gospel?
- Why is the resurrection non-negotiable in evangelism?
- What were the three types of responses Paul received? How do we see these today?
- How can we be faithful in sharing even if results vary?

💬 Group Discussion

- What's one area of your faith (e.g., resurrection, moral truth, problem of evil) you need to understand better so you can explain it clearly?
- Think of one person you know—how could you connect with what they value as a way to introduce what God says?
- This week, who do you plan to share one gospel truth with?

✏️ Personal Reflection

Paul shows us how to love boldly, think clearly, and speak faithfully. Which of the three areas—discipleship, cultural engagement, and evangelism—do you want to grow in the most?

📦 Next Steps: "One Truth to One Person"

Evangelism isn't about winning arguments—it's about winning people. Share biblical truth with someone this week. Start with where they are, and lead them toward Jesus. Have you taken the Just 1 Training? If not, identify a Gospel Partner and take the training together at reachjust1.com.

🙏 Close in Prayer

Ask God for:

- Courage to engage culture with truth
- Compassion for those lost in false worship
- Wisdom to speak at the right time
- Open doors for gospel conversations

WEEK 5: The Heart of Apologetics

Truth in Love

🧭 Lesson Overview

Key Verse: 1 Timothy 4:16 “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

Sunday Message: Truth without love repels; love without truth misleads. Jesus models how to speak truth in love—disarming hostility and drawing hearts toward repentance. We must defend truth in a way that reflects the heart of Christ. People are attracted to love and truth.

Big Idea: Jesus models the perfect balance of truth and love. As His followers, we are called to uphold truth without compromise, while extending grace without fear.

Real Life Connection: Apologetics bears fruit in discipleship, cultural engagement, and evangelism, just like Paul in Athens. Learning how to defend our faith also increases our ability to engage culture and its anti–Christian views

🧊 Icebreaker

❓ *Have you ever been told you were “too bold” or “too soft” in your faith?*

❓ *Why do you think spiritual truth feels threatening to some people, even when it’s shared in love?*

📖 Scripture and Reflection

Read: John 8:1–11
Reflect and Discuss: Jesus Upheld the Truth

- What truths did Jesus affirm here?
- Why didn’t He ignore the woman’s sin?
- How can we grow in grace-filled truth-telling?

Reflect and Discuss: Jesus Loved Deeply

- How did Jesus protect and restore the woman?
- What does “Go and sin no more” reveal?
- Who in your life needs both truth and grace?

📚 Teaching: TRUTH + LOVE = THE GOSPEL IN ACTION

Read: 1 Timothy 4:16 – Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

Agree or Disagree with the following statements and why. Share with the group your reasoning.

- "Truth without love is a weapon."
- "Love without truth is a lie."
- "Truth with love is the Gospel in Action."

💬 Group Discussion

Who in your life needs to hear both truth and love from you right now?

✏️Personal Reflection

Which part of Jesus' character do you need to grow in more: His courage to speak truth or His compassion to love? What's one conversation you've been avoiding that needs both truth and love?

📦 Next Steps: "Truth + Love Conversation"

Reflect daily on the question: "Do I tell the truth in love?"

Initiate one hard but loving conversation this week. Ask God to help you balance truth and grace, and practice honesty and compassion. If they make a decision for Christ, encourage them to be Water Baptized at your campus or at the Annual Beach Baptism on October 19th. You can sign up to serve at the Beach Baptism as well.

🙏 Close in Prayer

Ask God to:

- Give each person the courage to speak the truth with gentleness
- Help us follow Jesus' model of bold grace.
- Provide opportunities this week to lovingly challenge and encourage someone.
- Let this study continue in the practice of our lives.

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