

Neighborly Apologetics

Neighborly Apologetics, Foundations, Basics

[Del Tackett Neighborly Apologetics Series Video link](#)

[Del Tackett NA-0 Foundations and Basics Slides](#)

DT

This introduction to Neighborly Apologetics is kind of an apologetic on neighborly apologetics to make a difference for why we're doing apologetics this way rather than the traditional way that apologetics has morphed into in our Christian world today.

Dell says, "I'm not belittling that I'm just saying that I think we need to have a perspective that is in line with the Lord's call for us to be engaged with the people who live around us."

SR

He will expand on the comparison of what he calls "Academic Apologetics" & "Neighborly Apologetics" later in the lesson and we probably won't actually get to that today. But a change to neighborly apologetics he believes is necessary for us to engage the current world that he believes God has given over to a depraved mind. And if you think America and the world has lost its collective mind and gone insane then you agree with him.

So, on to Neighborly Apologetics. We begin with:

The Royal Law

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James tells us ...fulfill **the royal law** according to the Scripture... love your neighbor as yourself... -James 2:8

Paul says For the whole law is fulfilled in one word... **love** your neighbor as yourself. -Galatians 5:14

For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this one word:... **love** your neighbor as yourself. -Romans 13:9

Jesus Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commands. -Matthew 22:37-40

Love a steadfast, sacrificial zeal that seeks the true good of another

Neighbor The Greek word 'plesion' - for one who lives near, nearby, a neighbor

a steadfast, sacrificial zeal that seeks the true good of the one who **providentially** lives near you

Do you see our neighbor this way?

The Royal Law — Love your neighbor

This is ground zero in the work of the Kingdom. God wants us to be engaged in the people that are providentially around us. This means that God has entrusted the primary work of the Kingdom to the common Christian family. That's what we read about in the scripture about the role of the Elders (Pastor) and the leaders in the church, their job is to equip the saints for the work and that is in line with the Royal Law.

So the vision we offer here in this context (Neighborly Apologetics) is Christian families, my wife, my kids, we together are going to engage ourselves in building real relationships.

The Christian family

We will build real relationships
(significant relationships) with those
who are providentially in our Jerusalem (nearby)
(through prayer, and that is absolutely critical,)
with grace and wisdom and truth,
being attractively winsome,
tearing down walls, building up trust,
doing the work of the Kingdom.

Memory Verses

So I have three memory verses for you as a family to memorize. You as parents memorize them, have your children memorize them as we begin to engage our neighbors. Because I think these are key verses that will help us understand and realize what it means when God calls us to have a defense for our faith.

The 1st one comes from 1st Peter:

memory verse 1

1 Peter 3:15

"...but in your hearts **honor Christ** the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense** to anyone **who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you**; yet do it with **gentleness and respect.**"

And so here in this passage we'll look at a few of these words and phrases and draw them out in understanding what God is calling us to do.

The 1st is *make a defense* - the Greek word is: *Apologia*

From which we get the word apologetic and that's what it means: *making a defense*. The rest of this passage is telling us that we are to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

My position is that no one is going to ask you for a reason for the hope that is in you if they don't know you, if we haven't built a relationship with someone, they are not going to do that, they just won't.

Shallow relationships won't bring that about, drive-by Christianity won't bring that about, relationships will.

We have to be faithful in our walk when things don't go well that we manifest that hope... otherwise we'll look like anybody else.

But it's in that deep relationship that people can see that witness of hope that's in you and begin to ask those questions.

We'll see this in every verse, that the notion that this is to be done with **gentleness** and **respect** which is the great understanding of how we're going to do neighborly apologetics that it is always going to be done with grace, it's always going to be done with respect, it will always be done with gentleness.

And all of this, as the scripture says, then "**honors Christ**", the Lord as holy.

And of course we want to do that.

memory verse 2 from Colossians

Colossians 4:5-6

Conduct yourselves with **wisdom** toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. **Let your speech always be with grace**, as though **seasoned with salt**, so that you **might know how to respond to each person**.

We are going to spend some time on this verse because it is so important for us in terms of how God is laying out for us how we conduct ourselves toward outsiders.

wisdom

The 1st word that is important there for us is the notion of "**wisdom**". And this is so critical.

And I will confess to you (Dell says) that for most of my Christian life my conduct toward outsiders was not driven by wisdom. It was driven by my agenda. It was driven by my desire to beat them: academically, logically, rationally, to win the argument, to show them they were wrong.

And all of those things I'm quite ashamed of, but for sure, my conduct was not done with wisdom. And it especially was not done according to what were going to see in the rest of this verse. It's important for us to recognize and understand, because I think many of us do misunderstand the notion of **wisdom**. But if you really do a study on wisdom you will find that godly wisdom is not what [you may] think it was. I used to think that wisdom was for me, right? I wanted wisdom. I used to ask God for wisdom, you know, according to the scripture, "if any man ask for wisdom" and I didn't get it. And one of the reasons I didn't get it was because I was asking for it in a selfish way. I wanted it for me. For all of the wrong reasons. You know, to puff myself up or whatever that was.

But godly wisdom is not primarily for yourself.

Godly wisdom is primarily for the "**shalom**" (peace) of another. For the true good of another. This is why God was pleased with Solomon when Solomon asked for wisdom he didn't ask for himself. God made that clear, He said, "you didn't ask for things for yourself," but he asked for wisdom and scripture tells us he asked for wisdom "for the **shalom**" of his people.

So, we begin talking here about how we're going to go forward in neighborly apologetics and the word "**wisdom**" is critical for us. And we'll talk some more about that and what that looks like in just a minute.

But in the rest of the passage, let's look at this:

Let your speech always be with grace,

This is reinforcing what we talked about in the Peter passage, that our attitude here in neighborly apologetics is not going to be one of arrogance. It's not going to be one where we look down on people. It's not going to be one where we're in combat with people. It's going to be one where we are really engaging in relationship and our speech is always with Grace, always with grace 100% of the time. Not just when somebody's a nice neighbor, not just when somebody's a person that you like. But our speech is always with Grace, always with Grace seasoned with salt.

as though seasoned with salt,

This is so interesting. This is just an incredible way that the Spirit of God has moved Paul to write these words: that our speech, always with Grace, is seasoned with salt. And that seasoning then provides for us the means by which we will then know how to respond to **each** person.

so that you might know how to respond to each person.

This is why we need wisdom. And we need discernment.

(So confession again, the way I approach people for many, many years in my life. And I was going to count up the number of apologetic books I have. I have brought one here, Personal apologetics. I have been through this so many times. I even have the Apologetics Study Bible. But I will tell you that my study of those was, I guess I could say a misdirected motive, that my study of apologetics was primarily driven by my desire to **know**. And in that knowledge possibly feel more important, smarter than, all of those kinds of things, but for sure the motive was to win arguments. And that motive, I'm going to confess to you is not one that is reflected here in Colossians 4. Because when I approach people, I approach people not from the wisdom and discernment to listen as to how **each person** is speaking and where they are so that my response to them would be tailored according to who they are. I followed my own agenda.)

And so, Colossians here is telling us that we need a wisdom and discernment, praying that the Spirit of God will give us discernment as we begin to engage with people, seasoning our speech with grace that might stimulate a response from someone and that response from someone is what we then want to hear and understand and with the guidance from the Spirit of God to know then how we respond to each person. rather than my "one, two, three" agenda.

Discernment

So let's talk about this discernment. We will deal with this more as we go forward in these [lessons], but we'll introduce it here because it's really important for us.

Why? Because the scriptures are calling us to have wisdom to know how to respond to **each person**. That's discernment. We need wise discernment. And the first thing we do need to understand [of] course [is] that humanity is really broken up into two categories when it comes to all of the spiritual realm.

And that is the **believer** and the **non-believer**. And what we need to discern when we're talking with someone is, if our neighbor is a believer or our neighbor is **not** a believer.

Discernment - believer or non-believer

Relationships	
believer	non believer

Now we confess that line is a nice little white bright line there, but it's **not** always a bright white line. Sometimes it's not easy to discern. In fact, the scripture tells us that there will be people that are weeds and tares within the body of Christ. There will be those who have done amazing things. You remember the very, very hard verses where people came to Jesus and said, "Did we not cast out demons in your name", and all those kinds of things and then those most terrible words in all the universe: "Depart from me, I never knew you." Those are hard words.

And so, that line [can be] very difficult, hard to discern, but it is important for us to know: are we dealing with a believer or dealing with a non-believer? And that will drive how we will then respond and deal with people.

We also need to discern whether or not this is a believer or a **non-believer** who is **open to God** or are they **closed to God**?

Discernment of non-believer

Relationships		
believer	non believer	
	open to God	closed to God

I think reality is still, even in this culture as much as it is slipping away from us, that there are really very, very few people who were totally closed to God.

(I chose to watch a football game last night. In a very, very critical football game in the NFL and so forth.

I spent time doing that and if you have heard the news or you haven't, there was a very serious injury. In fact, it was so serious that they canceled the game. As a result of an injury in which the ambulance came onto the field and the First Responders were doing some very drastic CPR measures on this player late last night. He was taken to the hospital and was in critical condition.

My understanding today is that he may have improved that he most likely went into cardiac arrest as a result of a blow to the chest. But what was interesting about this was that the players were all down on the knees praying. And the announcers were talking about praying for him and just as we have heard the phrase that when the fox hole is under a deep barrage, there are no atheists in the foxhole, that when people were confronted with a life and death situation, in this case, with a very close friend, that they turned to prayer.)

These are the kinds of things that we will talk about later on as these [lessons] proceed, to talk about these events that are going on in the world around us to make that defense.

And so, a non-believer who's closed to God is very difficult. We'll talk about that in a minute, but the non-believer who is open to God might be willing to talk about what happened (last night—above). They might be willing to talk about what happened last night, maybe to engage them in a question, really praying to, you know, and if he survives and he turns out okay. Are they going to think that prayers did something and if they don't think they do anything, then why were they praying. In other words, you can see the argument as we proceed forward here with talking to a non-believer.

In the light of the mass of people praying now for someone and the interesting thing is that there was no one in the announcers booth, there was no one in the stands, there was no one on the field that expressed their outrage that people were praying.

That no one in the announcer booth when they were talking about calling people to pray for this young man, which I was so thankful that they were saying that, but no one would dare, at that moment, say: wait a second that offends me that you're praying or that you're calling people to pray.

Anyway, these are the every day things that occur in the world around us that as we ask God to help us with these things. These are part of seasoning our speech with salt.

Okay, so the non-believer we have to recognize: are they open to God or are they closed to God. Are they hostile to God or do they have a sense that maybe there is someone out there, so to speak.

We also need to recognize, if your neighbor professes to be a believer, Are they a believer that has a solid Biblical worldview? Or are they a believer which, you may know surveys show 93% of self-identified born again believers **do not** have a Biblical worldview or it's a very shallow worldview.

So, do they have a solid Biblical world view or do they NOT have a solid Biblical worldview?

Discernment of believer

Relationships			
believer		non believer	
biblical worldview	no biblical worldview	open to God	closed to God

If they have a solid Biblical worldview you may want to invite them to go through the Engagement Project with you so that they can begin to understand the Royal Law. This is what God has called us to do and why you and your family are willing to engage the people that are in your *Jerusalem* and to call them alongside of you to pray with you as you maybe gauge your neighborhood.

If they do not have a Biblical worldview then I would think and suggest you do everything you can to help them build a Biblical worldview. One of the ways to do that is to invite them to go through the Truth Project with you. And then after that to go through the Engagement Project with you.

Now the important thing in all of this is that our engaging with the world around us with the believers and non-believers is that all of this is going to be done through a deep significant relationship.

And to some extent I guess we could say that is what is going to characterize Neighborly apologetics as opposed to the way I used to do it. That this is going to be done with the context of deep significant relationship(s). And I don't want to be overly critical here, but quite frankly modern Christianity doesn't do relationships and most of our programs don't really do relationships, deep relationships.

But we need to do what the Lord modeled for us. He built very first thing he did was form his small group. He built relationships with them and even drove those relationships deeper with three of those men. And it was over that period of time as he built those deeper relationships with those men that he slowly began to reveal deeper and deeper things with them.

And so, the only way I believe that we're going to gain an audience and gain an entrance. The only way we're going to be able to earn the right to be able to speak into people's lives, especially in today.

Colossians 4:5-6

*Conduct yourselves with **wisdom** toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. **Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you might know how to respond to each person.***

Discernment

Relationships			
believer		non believer	
biblical worldview	no biblical worldview	open to God	closed to God
	Truth Project		
Engagement Project	Engagement Project		

Invitation

We are extending the invitation, now, to anyone who is subject to it. If you need to, Come,... while we stand and sing.