

Neighborly Apologetics

Dr. Del Tackett's Neighborly Apologetics Webinar Series

26-0211wc - Neighborly Apologetics, Foundations-Basics, Dr. Del Tackett

This detailed summary by Grok / X, (Transcription by TurboScribe.ai)

Del's site: deltackett.com, [Neighborly Apologetics Series Video link](#), [1-Foundations and Basics Slides](#)

Class Resources: [NA-links](#), Our website: wschurchofchrist.org/education.php

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Neighborly Apologetics Summary

26-0211-Summary: 1 - Foundations, Basics (0:04 - 48:51)

Teacher: Dr. Del Tackett

(0:04 - 1:53) Introducing Neighborly Apologetics – A Relational, Biblical Alternative to Traditional Methods

From this perspective, we're doing a little bit of apologetics here for neighborly apologetics itself—making the case for why we're approaching it this way rather than the traditional form that apologetics has morphed into in much of the modern Christian world. I'm not belittling traditional apologetics; I'm simply saying we need a perspective aligned with the Lord's call to engage the people who live around us. This is ground zero in the work of the Kingdom: the ordinary Christian family has been entrusted with this Kingdom work. Scripture shows that pastors and church leaders equip the saints for the work of ministry, which is consistent with the royal law of loving our neighbor. The vision we're offering is that Christian families—husband, wife, children together—will build real, significant relationships with those providentially placed in our Jerusalem through prayer (absolutely critical), action, grace, wisdom, and truth. We aim to be attractively winsome as the Spirit bears fruit in our lives, tearing down walls, building trust, and doing Kingdom work the way it was done in the early church.

(1:53 - 4:48) Key Scriptures and the Necessity of Deep Relationships for Genuine Apologetics

We have three verses for families to memorize, discuss, and live by as we engage neighbors. The first is 1 Peter 3:15: "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." Here we find "apologia"—the Greek word for "defense," from which we get "apologetics." The passage instructs us to make a defense to anyone who asks for the reason for our hope—but no one will ask if they don't know us. Shallow relationships or "drive-by Christianity" won't prompt those questions; only deep relationships will. We must walk faithfully, especially in trials, manifesting that hope so others see it and begin to inquire. Every verse emphasizes gentleness, respect, and grace—honoring Christ as holy in how we engage. The second key verse is

Colossians 4:5-6: "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." This passage is foundational for how we conduct ourselves toward outsiders.

(4:48 - 11:08) Wisdom, Grace, and Discernment – Personal Confession and Godly Priorities

The word "wisdom" here is critical. For much of my Christian life, my conduct toward outsiders was driven not by wisdom but by my own agenda—to win arguments, beat others logically, feel smarter. I confess I was ashamed of that approach. Godly wisdom is not primarily for ourselves; it is for the shalom—the true flourishing—of another. Solomon pleased God because he asked for wisdom not for himself but for the good of his people. Our speech must always be with grace—not arrogant, not combative, but relational—100% of the time, regardless of the neighbor. It should be "seasoned with salt," giving it flavor and preserving power, so we know how to respond to each person uniquely. My past study of apologetics—hundreds of books, the Apologetics Study Bible—was often motivated by a desire to win arguments rather than listen with discernment. Colossians calls us to pray for the Spirit's wisdom and discernment, seasoning speech with grace, listening to responses, and tailoring answers to the individual rather than following a one-size-fits-all agenda.

(11:08 - 17:49) Discerning Spiritual Categories and Using Current Events in Conversation

Discernment begins by recognizing two broad spiritual categories: believer or non-believer. The line isn't always bright white—Scripture warns of tares among wheat and those who will hear "Depart from me; I never knew you" despite mighty works—so we must seek wisdom. With non-believers, we further discern openness or closedness to God. Few are completely closed; even in our drifting culture, life-and-death moments—like the serious NFL injury last night where players knelt in prayer and announcers called for prayer—reveal a natural turning toward God. No one objected to the prayers in that moment. These everyday events allow us to season speech with salt, gently asking open non-believers: Who were they praying to? If the player survives, will they credit prayer? If not, why pray at all? Such questions open doors for defense of the faith.

(17:49 - 24:12) Engaging Believers and Navigating a Culture Potentially Given Over to a Depraved Mind

For professing believers, discern whether they hold a solid biblical worldview (rare—surveys suggest only a small percentage do) or a shallow one. If solid, invite them into the Engagement Project to understand the royal law and join in praying for and engaging the neighborhood. If shallow, help build their worldview—perhaps starting with the Truth Project, then the Engagement Project. All engagement—believer or non-believer—happens through deep, significant relationships. This distinguishes neighborly apologetics from my former approach. Modern Christianity often neglects deep relationships, but Jesus modeled them: He formed a small group, deepened bonds with three, and gradually revealed truth. In a culture possibly given over by God to a depraved mind (Romans 1 progression: sexual immorality → dishonorable passions → depraved mind), academic apologetics alone hits brick walls or stirs hostility. A depraved mind loses the ability to reason with God ("Come, let us reason together"). Christianity is logical—God made us rational beings—but in such a culture, we must lead with relationships, responding gently to questions as they arise.

(24:14 - 29:19) Real-Life Example – Rosaria Butterfield and the Pattern of Relational Transformation

Building relationships feels foreign to much of modern Christianity, but Dr. Rosaria Butterfield's story illustrates its power. Once a militant, pro-abortion, LGBTQ-policy-writing professor living with her partner and opposing biblical values, she became a pastor's wife and homeschooling mother after "500 meals with enemies." Ken and Floy Smith simply loved her without an agenda, building trust over time. Only as the relationship deepened did she ask questions. The same pattern appears in **I Once Was Lost**: every conversion studied involved a deep, trusting relationship first, followed by questions. Ken wisely shared truth only as deep as the relationship could bear—true discernment. Rosaria said if they had approached her the way I used to, she would still be where she was. This pattern fits our cultural moment and why neighborly apologetics is needed.

(27:26 - 32:23) 2 Timothy 2:24-26 – Gentle Engagement and Dependence on God for Repentance

2 Timothy 2:24-26 reinforces this: the Lord's servant must be kind, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, gently correcting opponents "in the hope that God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." We engage with grace, gentleness, and respect; God grants repentance. We cannot argue or force anyone into it. This is why prayer is foundational—apologetics rests on God first opening eyes, hearts, and minds. We pray they "come to their senses" (like Nebuchadnezzar after eating grass or the Gadarene demoniac after deliverance). God must precede us; without Him, efforts fail. In deep relationships, hard truth can be spoken lovingly—even spiritual captivity by the devil is recognized in this context of spiritual warfare.

(32:24 - 43:21) Academic vs. Neighborly Apologetics and the Planned Categories of Discussion

We still need academic apologetics—it equips us to answer questions logically when they arise in relationships (e.g., the problem of evil when a neighbor grieves a painful loss). But we cannot lead with it in this cultural moment; we lead with relationship, praying God opens minds so questions emerge and discernment guides responses. Over the next year (possibly two), we'll address these categories (drawn from a large survey of stumbling blocks to faith): 1) Evil and suffering (emotionally hard, logically solvable); 2) Absolute truth vs. relativism; 3) One way to God (exclusivity and religious pluralism); 4) Faith and reason; 5) Free will and God's sovereignty; 6) Existence and nature of God; 7) Is man basically good? (plus judgment and hell); 8) Christian hypocrisy; 9) Claims of Jesus and the resurrection (likely multiple sessions); 10) Miracles; 11) Science and evolution (contrary to Romans 1's clear revelation in creation); 12) Veracity of Scripture (handling alleged contradictions); 13) Burning issues of our day (human sexuality, abortion, etc.—a cultural pressure point). Sensitive topics like sexuality require deep relationships, not public-square debates. Feedback on starting points is welcome via DelTackett.com or chat. This is all in the context of the royal law—Christian families (including singles with dorm or apartment neighbors) committed to their neighbors' shalom, turning the world upside down one neighbor at a time as in the first century.

(43:42 - 48:51) Closing Remarks, Logistics, and Prayer

Dr. Tackett closed by thanking participants, expressing gratitude for technology despite missing eye contact, and asking for prayer to continue. Facilitator Mark (Scott) summarized chat feedback (strong interest in "burning issues" and "evil and suffering"), promised the recording (noting the first five minutes were Engagement Project content), PDF slides, and encouraged exploring DelTackett.com articles, the Engagement Project, and upcoming events (e.g., North Pole, Alaska; Dickinson, ND; Scottsdale; San Marcos). Dr. Tackett closed in prayer: thanking God for speech, hearing, sight, Scripture, and the logical mind to discern right and wrong, God, and ourselves; asking God to open doors, hearts, and minds of neighbors as we engage with steadfast, sacrificial love—all for His glory, none for ours. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.