

2021 MS and HS Summer Youth Retreat

Goals:

- Answer and address hidden concerns, doubts and questions
- To lay a foundation for defending our faith
- To instill the idea that for any question, there IS an answer
- To give comfort that they can come to any of their servants with any of their questions judgment-free

Outline

- Sunday night Introductory Topic
 - What is Apologetics?
 - Can we know anything for certain?
 - How is faith involved?
 - What will we learn in this convention?
- Day 1: Does God Exist?
 - Station 1: Creation
 - How does the Creation account match with what we know?
 - Station 2: Science
 - How can we refute the false ideas presented as fact by science?
 - Station 3: Philosophical
 - What is our purpose in life? How does this convey the existence of God?
 - Station 4: Historical
 - What extra-biblical evidence is there for Christianity?
- Day 2: Which God? Proofs for Christianity
 - Station 1: Prophecy
 - How does the Old Testament point to the New?
 - Station 2: Logic
 - It is illogical that Christianity would have survived this long... unless it is true
 - Station 3: Resurrection
 - The Resurrection is the fundamental basis of Christianity... is there any proof for it?
 - Station 4: Miracles

- Are there any signs in the modern day and time of the truth of Christianity?

Resources

- Timeless Truth in Truthless Times (George Bassilios)
- Evidence for Christianity (Josh McDowell)
- The Historical Jesus (Gary Habermas)
- The Resurrection of the Shroud (Mark Antonacci)
- Intelligent Design 101 (H. Wayne House)
- Case for Christ (Lee Strobel)

Below are some ideas for the above outline... they are just potentials and nothing is set in stone. It is impossible to cover all of the below, but we should cover at least one or two items in every station.

The important thing will be interactive delivery, activities, etc.

Introductory Topic:

- "Pretest": I think it would be good to give them a handout or something that has some of the below questions phrased as yes or no questions. We know that they will say the right answer for all of them. But then after they are done, tell them "Now go through each question you just answered and prove it."
 - "Does God exist?"
 - "Did God create the world?"
 - "Did God create man or did man evolve from animals?"
 - "Did Jesus rise from the dead?"
 - "True or False: Jesus is God"
 - "True or False: The Holy Spirit is God"
- What is Apologetics? When do we use apologetics? What are the categories or levels of apologetics?
 - Christ used apologetics!
 - The disciples taught us to be ready to give an answer (e.g. 1 Peter 3:15)
 - We see examples of defending the faith in Scripture (St Stephen's speech, Elijah)
- Can we know for certain?
- How is faith involved?
- Is probability involved? Difference between possible and probable

Day 1: Does God exist

Goal: At the end of the day, we have arrived at the conclusion, from four different and independent perspectives, that God exists.

Station 1: Creation (Bible)

- In this station, we will read the Creation account in Genesis 1-2
- **Activity:** Everyone goes outside and examines nature from the smallest to the biggest of things, from the different seasons, different materials, patterns, colors. Then sit down and write what order the world was created in based on your observations.
- We can compare the Creation account and especially the order of creation with what science has told us (i.e. light and then water, plants and then animals)
- Also the importance of time - science tells us that millions of years were needed for the world to get to what it is now... does the Bible Support that? Or is it seven 24 hour days
- This Genesis account that was written thousands of years before the first telescopes and microscopes were invented... what are the odds that it got it all right?

Station 2: Science

- What is science? What is the scientific method? What does science look like? Can science form a conclusion about something that's outside the physical realm?
- **Activity:** Do some experiment that collects data of some sort... and then let everyone form a conclusion from that data. Compare conclusions... see how the data is linked to the conclusion?
- How do we argue against science?
 - Challenge the Integrity of the Data
 - Identify a gap between the data and the conclusion
 - Offer an alternate conclusion based on the Data
- Origin of Life:
 - What is Evolution? What does science KNOW? What does science THEORIZE?
 - Challenge the data, identify the gap, offer an alternate conclusion
- Origin of Matter:
 - What is the Big Bang? What does science KNOW? What does science THEORIZE?
 - Challenge the data, identify the gap, offer an alternate conclusion

Station 3: Philosophical (Patristic)

- If God exists, why did He create man?
- What is my purpose in life?
- How does the existence of God give me purpose in life?
- What is free will? How do I know I have free will?
- Why does God allow people to suffer?
- George Bassilious covers this area very well in Timeless Truths
- We don't have to cover all of these points (since time is limited)

Station 4: Historical

- Extrabiblical sources of Christ
- Archaeology, Historical Documents, etc.
- Maybe the Shroud of Turin and Sudarium of Oviedo?

- Biblical Manuscripts (as compared with manuscripts of any other writing in the history of the world)
- <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/youth-writings/the-case-for-jesus-from-a-well-prepared-15-year-old/>

Day 2: Which God?

Goal: At the end of the day, we know how to defend our Christian faith against some of the common attacks

Station 1: Prophecies

- As part of Engagement/Activity, we can liken this to fingerprint evidence... maybe some sort of game where they are detectives and they have to find all the fingerprints
- How does the Old Testament point to Christ?
 - Typology
 - Shadows
 - Prophecies
- What are the odds

Station 2: Logical

- There are three ways to spread a message for it to be successful:
 - With Deceit (i.e. in secret) - Mormonism
 - With Power and Compulsion (i.e. forcefully) - Islam
 - Openly, with conviction, tolerating the consequences - Christianity
- It is illogical that Christianity would have survived or flourished:
 - The message was difficult to accept
 - You cannot join the group unless you believe the message
 - The message was spread at a time of no "freedom of speech" or "political correctness"
 - Christianity had many powerful opponents
 - Religious opponents in the Jews
 - Philosophical/Intellectual opponents in the Greeks
 - Political opponents in the Romans
 - Punishment is severe torture, imprisonment or death
 - Started with very few people (just 120 or so)
 - All of the leaders were martyred and killed publicly
 - If it was a lie, why would they die for it?
 - If it's a mass lie... really, no one gave in and said the truth? What did they gain?
 - To join you had to forsake your riches and forsake worldly pleasures

Station 3: The Resurrection

- What are the proofs of the Resurrection?

- What are the arguments against the Resurrection and how do we answer them? (e.g. Mass Hallucination... Jewish argument, etc.)
- "I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely" - Charles Colson

Station 4: Modern-Day Miracles and Saints

- St Mary Zeitoun happened in the late 60s, went on for two years, there are photographs from before the days of Photoshop (some of them taken by Muslims), many people came from around the world to witness it
- Pope Kyrillos and the multitudes that witnessed to his miracles

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