

HERE ARE SIX ASSUMPTIONS TO AVOID WHEN BRINGING APOLOGETICS TRAINING TO THE LOCAL CHURCH:

1. ***Training is fundamentally the result of substantive lecturing and “book-learning.”*** What are the contemporary, dominant ways for conveying apologetics content? In text form (especially as books) and doing events/conferences and lectures? If so, it is not surprising that such dominant communication *means* shape what is understood and expected to be main *models* for training in apologetics. Lectures, books, events, and other *products* to experience are not inherently inadequate means, but they are only one among many means. And if apologetics goes beyond merely conveying information and knowledge (content) to include a particular kind of character development, then it behooves leaders and educators in apologetics to convey a strategic imagination about the relevant means to fulfill real and felt training needs in this area.
2. ***Training is really learning how to utilize debate tactics against opponents of Christian truth.*** If lecturing is not perceived to be the dominant mode of doing communication in apologetics, debating probably is. When people think of apologetics they often think of how to compete and defend someone in a debate. That tends to be the dominant image that pervades their outlook in this area. Sadly, many people often eliminate themselves from engaging in apologetics because they are not good at arguing or engaging in a debate, and because they think that apologetics is all about communicating in debate form, they conclude that apologetics must not be for them but only for those with such command of skills and technique. One can debate the benefits of what debating actually accomplishes. But there should be a widespread recognition among apologetics enthusiasts in a local church that learning apologetics is not equal to learning debate tactics.
3. ***Training is all about memorizing apologetics arguments and talking points,*** to be repeated as needed. There is something to be said for taking-stock and memorizing basic arguments for some claim relevant to the Christian worldview (e.g., arguments for God’s existence). But this alone is inadequate as an intention, means and approach to learning apologetics. For doing apologetics is also about learning to improvise in conversation, listen astutely, cultivate a character that is winsome and virtuous, being non-defensive with one’s convictions, and trusting and cooperating with the Holy Spirit.
4. ***Successful training has occurred when students of apologetics sound like great apologists.*** Though this aspiration is often unspoken, many think a ready defender of the faith will sound like Lee Strobel, Hank Hanegraaff, William Lane Craig, Ravi Zacharias, J.P. Moreland, Craig Hazen, Norm Geisler, Paul Copan, or any other favorite apologist. In one sense, this aspiration is understandably commendable. Compared to a generation ago, there are now more models than ever to have before one’s mind and to consider how these models get the job done in apologetics, philosophy, theology, and evangelism. But the ultimate goal of apologetics training and aspiration should *not* be centered on these personalities as models. We are not called to have their calling. We have our own calling, even if it overlaps or resembles theirs. Not only do these models have their own calling but they have their own voice and platform. It is folly to separate calling from voice and platform. The standard should not be to mimic them in that regard. Rather, our training and ministry in apologetics should seek to be attentive to how these models work but also discern what our unique contributions are in this area and how can that get worked out through our various vocations.

5. ***Training is ultimately about stockpiling superior intellectual ammunition against non-Christian thinking.*** This attitude is incommensurate and full of so much myopic thinking about people and ideas.

6. ***Training is for self-identified intellectuals (or for those aspiring to be) who otherwise wouldn't have a "home" in a local church.*** Self-identified apologists, and Christian scholars in general, often have an accompanying anxiety about the local church that runs something like this: the local church does not appear to prize the life of the mind given the sort of anti-intellectual, simplistic, and cliché-driven pronouncements that fill this environment, especially teaching contexts like the Sunday pulpit or Sunday school. The solution? Perhaps unintentionally or intentionally, scholars and other academic-types congregating among themselves as a sub-community or niche group in a church. In one sense, this outcome as a default posture is understandable, if pastors or a church's ethos fail to help academic types belong. However, there is much to be said for academic types being socialized by a local church's environment, where they can regularly enter into interaction and service with and for non-academic types. The problem is making "training" into an insular, self-contained hang-out for academic groupies. The straightforward yet consequential goal of local church apologetics work should be to equip people to be resourceful with answers to tough questions through their vocations in the world. So, we want to aim to equip people from within their everyday life.

Courtesy of [A Reasonable Response](#), Dr. William Lane Craig & Joseph Gorra