



# Apologetics in the Church: A Safe Place to Ask Hard Questions

Truth in Love Apologetics Conference  
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# Apologetics in the Church: A Safe Place to Ask Hard Questions

- ▶ What's your story about Apologetics?
- ▶ Does church need to be a safe place to ask hard questions?
- ▶ Why does this matter? And why now?

# Is Church as safe place to ask hard questions?

- ▶ Are you a safe person to ask questions? Who decides?
- ▶ Why is asking hard questions so difficult?
  - ▶ Mark 9:32 “But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.”
- ▶ We may unknowingly create a culture where doubts and questions stay under the surface.

# Our Objective:

- ▶ We as a church:

1. Recognize the commonness of doubt
2. Welcome the necessary questions
3. Nurture hope that God knows the answers

- ▶ So how do we actually do this?

# 1. Recognizing the Commonness of Doubt

- ▶ What's your story about doubt? Your church's story?

“If you trust and never doubt,  
he will surely bring you out.” TH #222

# Doubt & Uncertainty: Part of unbelief or part of faith?

**Unbelief**

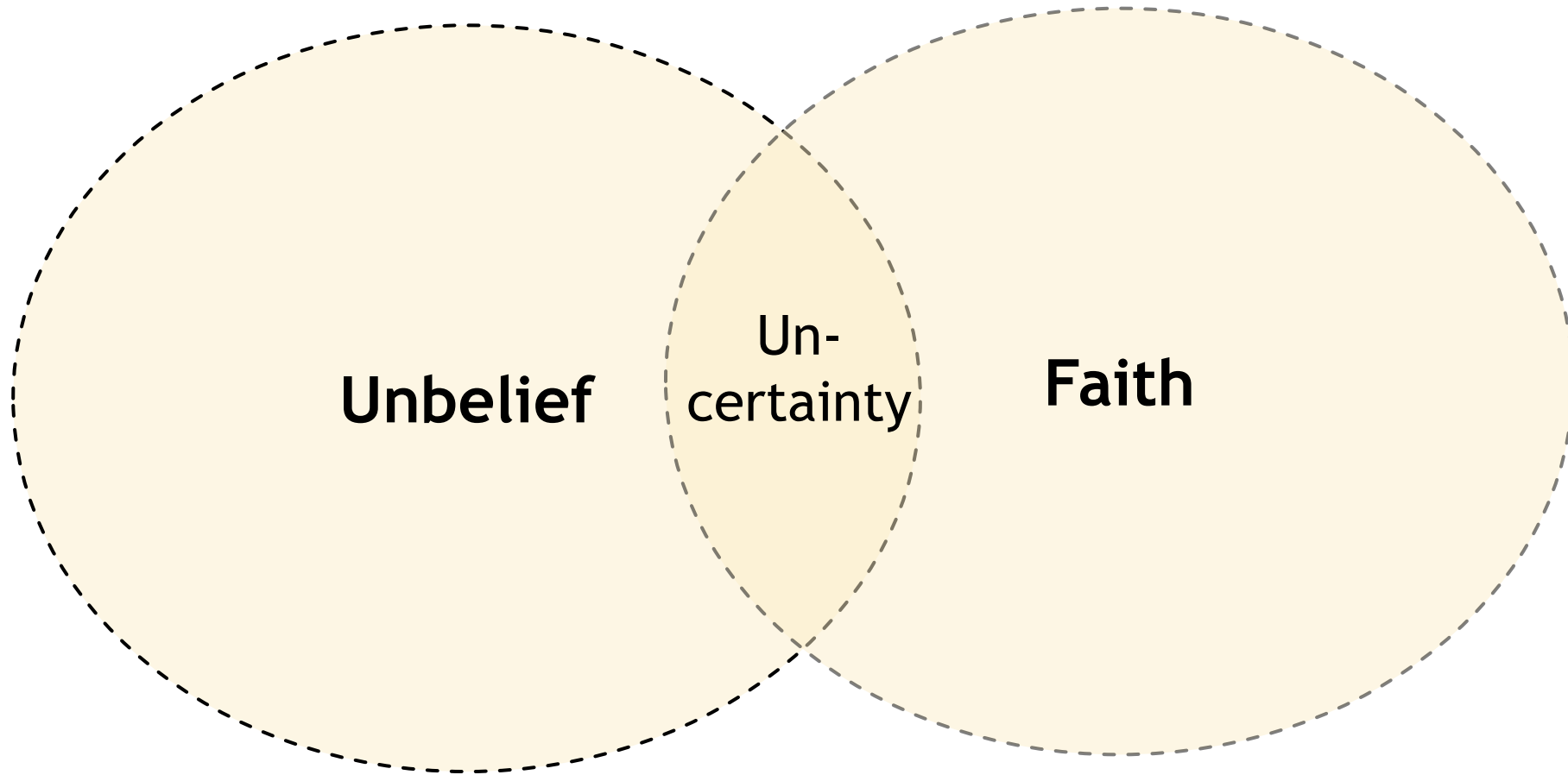
Uncertainty  
& Doubt

**Faith**

Trust

- ▶ Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

# Doubt & Uncertainty: Part of unbelief or part of faith?



- ▶ Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

# 1. Recognizing the Commonness of Doubt:

- ▶ Doubt and questions are often part of the path to faith and the life of faith.
- ▶ If you trust *him* through *your* doubt, he will surely bring you out.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course (the race), I have kept the faith:



# 1. Recognizing the Commonness of Doubt

- ▶ Teaching a healthy mindset around doubt
- ▶ Understanding types and seasons of doubt and the corresponding hard questions
- ▶ Bringing to light examples of healthy journeys through doubt
- ▶ Modeling healthy vulnerability

## 2. Welcoming the Necessary Questions

- ▶ Readiness: Preparing heart and mind
- ▶ Invitation: Making space for questions
- ▶ Response: “I’m glad you asked...”

## 2. Welcoming the Necessary Questions:

- ▶ Readiness: Preparing heart and mind

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:

and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you

with meekness (gentleness) and fear (respect):

- ▶ Right heart, life, and focus on the Lord
- ▶ Sufficiently Equipped
- ▶ Anchored in Hope
- ▶ Gentle & Respectful

## 2. Welcoming the Necessary Questions:

- ▶ Invitation: safe space for questions to surface

John 16:19: Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said...

Acts 20:20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and **have taught you publicly, and from house to house,**

## 2. Welcoming the Necessary Questions:

- ▶ Is our initial response: “I’m Glad you Asked”?

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

### 3. Nurture hope that God knows the answers

- ▶ What do you want them to feel?
- ▶ What do you want them to do?
- ▶ How do you get there?

### 3. Nurture hope that God knows the answers

Learning from Paul:

1 Corinthians 9:20-23

- ▶ And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; ... To them that are without law, as without law,... that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:
- ▶ *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

# 3. Nurture hope that God knows the answers

- ▶ Meet them where they are, find out where they've been
  - ▶ Surface vs. Layers; Emotions/Relationships vs. Intellect
- ▶ Dialogue and relationship, not just answers
  - ▶ Answer questions with questions
  - ▶ Caution: Direct declarative answers can shut down dialogue and relationship.
  - ▶ Instead: explore perspectives, provide frameworks
  - ▶ Be careful over-simplifying. Be careful over-complicating



### 3. Nurture hope that God knows the answers

- ▶ Love -- what matters most - the more excellent way
  - ▶ I can have all the answers and all the faith in the world, but if I don't have love -- it all avails to nothing. (1 Corin 13)
- ▶ Hope: Gentle confidence in God to provide answers
  - ▶ When I don't feel equipped, tap into the gifts of the Body of Christ (1 Corin 12:8-9)

# 3. Nurture hope that God knows the answers

- ▶ Prayer, Compassion, Encouragement (2 Timothy 1:3-5)
  - ▶ ...without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day... being mindful of thy tears...
  - ▶ When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee...
- ▶ Time, Experience, and the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-13)
  - ▶ I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.
  - ▶ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth

# Sunday School & Youth

- ▶ Proactive teaching
  - ▶ Starts early -- Age Appropriate — New Curriculum
  - ▶ Stories / examples / making space for hard questions
- ▶ When questions come...
  - ▶ Opportunity or Distraction?
  - ▶ Answer vs. Relationship
- ▶ Teacher awareness, gifting, training, resources
- ▶ Support for Parents

# Keeping it all in perspective

Jesus was a safe person to ask questions, and yet...

- ▶ Mark 9:32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.
- ▶ John 6:66 From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Thankfully,

- ▶ God is “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish...” (2 Peter 3:9)
- ▶ God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

# Apologetics in the Church: A Safe Place to Ask Hard Questions

- ▶ By God's grace, and with intention and awareness, each of our churches can be a place that:
  - ▶ Recognizes the commonness of doubt
  - ▶ Welcomes necessary questions
  - ▶ Nurtures hope that God knows the answers