Stoa Apologetics Preparation for Monument Members

Season 22 Monument Release #10



Directions: Work through the source material in this download to help you understand this week’s selection of apologetics prompts. This release addresses approximately 5% of the total number of prompts you will need to be prepared for in your next tournament, so keep up the studying from week to week to ensure your knowledge in Apologetics. This week’s prompts are:

**Category 5: Christian Worldview Application (Part 2)**

1. Compare and contrast the modern environmental movement’s view with the Christian view regarding caring for the earth.
2. From where does a person’s identity come? Why is this important?\*
3. Respond to the statement: “Evolution disproves Christianity.”
4. Is all human life valuable, and if so, why?\*
5. Respond to the Karl Marx quote: “Religion is the opium of the people.” Marx, Karl, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 1843\*
6. Respond to the critique that “God, the Father” is a sexist term that demeans women in general and mothers in particular.
7. Analyze the quote by Fyodor Dostoevsky: “If there is no God, then all things are permissible.” Dostoevsky, Fyodor, The Brothers Karamazov, 1879\*

\*This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. A worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

For a list of all the prompts for the year and all other downloads for NCFCA apologetics, visit your download page at <https://club.monumentmembers.com/stoa-apologetics/download-category/stoa-apologetics>.

Environmental Movement *by Luis Garcia*

Compare and contrast the modern environmental movement’s view with the Christian view regarding caring for the earth.

Bible Verses

Genesis 1:26-31

Exodus 20:4-6

Deuteronomy 10:14

Job 41:11

Psalm 8:5-8; 19:1-4a; 24:1-2; 50:10-11

Proverbs 12:10

Matthew 10:29

Luke 12:6

Romans 1:20-25; 8:20-25

Revelation 21:1-8

Recommendations

“Christians and the Environment: How Should Christians Think about the Environment?” by Calvin B. Dewitt and Robert Nash, *Christian Research Institute (CRI) Equip.org* (<http://www.equip.org/articles/christians-and-the-environment-how-should-christians-think-about-the-environment/>)

 “How should a Christian view environmentalism?” by S. Michael Houdmann, *GotQuestions.org* (<http://www.gotquestions.org/environmentalism-Christian.html>)

“NewsNote: Thinking Green—The New Religion” by R. Albert Mohler Jr., *AlbertMohler.com* (<http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/01/12/newsnote-thinking-green-the-new-religion/>)

“When Ecology Replaces Theology” by R. Albert Mohler Jr., *AlbertMohler.com* (<http://www.albertmohler.com/2007/10/03/when-ecology-replaces-theology/>)

Commentary

NOTE: This prompt was originally worded, “Is the environmental movement in conflict with Christianity?”

“Green” is gaining popularity in the growing concern for the environment. How are we as Christians to respond to the growing concerns of climate and nature?

First, we must recognize that God is the Creator of the environment. God made everything good and beautiful. Our sin was what brought corruption; creation groans for redemption (Romans 8:20-25; Revelation 21:1-8). Though there is corruption, Scripture still teaches of God’s care and concern for creation. This is found from passages concerning how God commanded the Israelites to give the land a sabbatical (Leviticus 25:1-7) to passages where he says that God is fully aware of when a sparrow falls or is sold (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6).

Second, God has given us the responsibility to be stewards over this creation (Genesis 1:26-31). We are to take care of what God has entrusted us. Our appreciation of this beautiful world we live is appreciation of the creativity and goodness of our God. Creation praises the Lord in it being His handiwork and speaking loud and clear that it was created by an amazing Designer.

Third though, we must also note that conservation should never be raised to the level of idolatry environmentalists can take it to and trump the most important priorities with which Christians have been commissioned. They worship the created rather than the Creator (Romans 1:20-25). Moreover, creation is a lower priority compared to the eternal responsibilities we are given, such as the stewarding of God’s Word. Protecting and proclaiming God’s Word should not be neglected or compromised to the agenda of environmentalism. The cosmos will one day pass, but souls will not. Saving animals is good, but it is not a higher concern than saving God’s crown of creation—people. “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). People are the part of creation that we must be most concerned with.

Personal Identity

From where does a person’s identity come? Why is this important?

This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. This worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

Evolution vs Christianity *by Christopher Larson*

Respond to the statement: “Evolution disproves Christianity.”

Bible Verses

Exodus 15:11

Deuteronomy 33:26

2 Chronicles 6:14

John 11:23-26

Quotes

“Christianity is not a system of man's search for God but a story of God's search for man. True religion is not like a cloud of incense wafting up from special spirits into the nostrils of a waiting God, but like a Father's hand thrust downward to rescue the fallen. Throughout the Bible, man-made religion fails. There is no human way up the mountain, only a divine way down. ‘No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.’” Peter Kreeft, (<http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics-more/christianity-uniqueness.htm>)

“The objector is always assuming the thing to be proved: that Christ is just one among many religious founders, human teachers. But he claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; if that claim is not true, he is not one among many religious sages but one among many lunatics. If the claim is true, then again he is not one among many religious sages, but the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Peter Kreeft, (http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics-more/christianity-uniqueness.htm)

Commentary

NOTE: This prompt was originally worded as a response statement. It read,

What is your response to this statement by Richard Dawkins: “Yet the living results of natural selection overwhelmingly impress us with the appearance of design as if by a master watchmaker”? *Dawkins, Richard. The Blind Watchmaker. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.1996, p.21*.

In Flannery O’Connor’s violent and shocking short story, “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” O’Connor has the villain, a serial killer, make a surprising statement. “Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead,” he says. “If He did what He said, then it’s nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him.” I can’t give a blanket recommendation for the story, but O’Connor’s point is crucial.

Christianity cannot be placed in the same category as all other religions. O’Connor understood this, and that reality–that if Jesus is the Son of God he must be obeyed–drove her writing. In this apologetics topic, Dawkins wants to denigrate Christianity. He implies that Christianity is simply another religion with the same basic principles and the same basic story as all other religions. Yahwheh is simply another God like Allah, Zeus, and Thor. Because Christianity is fundamentally the same as, say, folk Norse religion, it can be rejected just like one rejects folk Norse religion. He couldn’t be more wrong.

Christianity is unique on several fronts. Tim Keller, a pastor in New York, points out one of them in a Q&A he did at the Veritas Forum (linked below). Keller observes that all other religions were founded by people who came, saying, “here is the way to get to God.” Thus, Buddhism and Islam, for example, both offer different paths to please God, but they both offer paths. Salvation in these religions is achieved by finding God according to the path laid down by the sage.

As Keller says, only Christianity was founded by a man who makes the claim that, “I am God come to find you.”

Zeus never came to offer salvation to humanity. Humanity had to, through a complex system of sacrifices, prayers, and rituals, find their way to Zeus. Christianity offers a radically different path. This influences much of what Jesus says. The Gospel of John emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ over and over again.

For example, in John 11 Jesus comes to see Martha and Mary after their brother, Lazarus, has died. Jesus looks at Martha and says, “Your brother will rise again. (v. 23)” Martha says, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” So far this episode offers nothing distinctive about the Christian faith. One might assume that Lazarus had followed the commands of Jesus and thus found his way to God. Because of this, he would rise again on the last day. But that’s not what Jesus says.

John 11:25-26: “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Jesus does not simply offer a path to resurrection, He is the resurrection.

Not only is Jesus distinct from other religious leaders because of who he claims to be, but because of how he offers salvation. Notice what he said in the verse above. He claims to be the resurrection and the life, and then says that this resurrection and life can be achieved by believing in Him.

Zeus sits on his throne, his prophets explaining how we can work our way towards him. Jesus walked among us, explaining how people can receive the work He has already done on our behalf. This is why O’Connor was so convinced that, if Jesus is who He said He is, and if He has done what He claims to have done, then there is nothing to do but “throw away everything and follow Him.” Jesus offers salvation by grace. There are no works that you do, no goodness you muster up. You are given eternal life because of the One who is the Life.

Dawkins wants to reject Christianity like any other religion, but to do so reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of Christianity. Christianity offers no complex sacrificial system, no detailed method of salvation by works, no ladder that lets you climb to God. Instead Christianity asks a simple question–“Do you believe this?”–and demands a radical commitment in answer to that question.

To treat Christianity as anything but unique is to avoid the question entirely.

Value of Life

Is all human life valuable, and if so, why?

This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. This worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

Religion Is Opium of the People

Respond to the Karl Marx quote: “Religion is the opium of the people.” Marx, Karl, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 1843

This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. This worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

Women *by Maggie Topper*

Respond to the critique that “God, the Father” is a sexist term that demeans women in general and mothers in particular.

Verses:

Galatians 3:28;

Exodus 20:12

Joshua 8:35

Titus 2:9-10

Exodus 21:16, 20

Philemon 1:8

1 John 4:20

Quotations:

“Although the gospel does not approve of removing slavery by social revolution, the gospel throughout history has brought the freedom of more slaves than any human philosophy, movement, or political system.”- John MacArthur

“If the design of the death of his Son is not only to reconcile us to God, but to reconcile alienated ethnic groups to each other in Christ, then will we not display and magnify the cross of Christ better by more and deeper and sweeter ethnic diversity and unity in our worship and life?” - John Piper

 “Man and woman are one in essence. That is to say, Adam and Eve are equal in dignity, value, and glory. In essential unity there is absolutely no room for inferiority of person. The man and woman are equal in every respect except one – authority. Two different tasks are given to people of equal value and dignity. In the economy of marriage, only the job descriptions are different.” -R.C. Sproul

Recommendations:

<https://carm.org/slavery>

<http://coldcasechristianity.com/2014/four-differences-between-new-testament-servitude-and-new-world-slavery/>

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-slavery.html>

<http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/god-created-man-male-and-female-what-does-it-mean-to-be-complementarian>

Commentary:

NOTE: This prompt was originally written as, “How would you respond to the following criticism: ‘The Bible supports oppression of slaves and women’?”

You will most likely meet people who, when they find out that you are a Christian, are astonished that you could believe a book that supports slavery and downgrades women. Fundamentally, people who hold this view have a misunderstanding of the culture of the time, and the details of matters concerning slaves and women in Scripture.

Let’s start off looking at slavery in the Bible, since I find this one is a little easier to explain in a satisfactory manner. There are usually one of two things people are thinking when they make a statement like this. The first is all the passages in the Bible (mainly Old Testament) that teach how to handle slaves and the fact that this slavery is never forbidden in the New Testament. The second problem people have is that historically, there have been many people who identified with Christianity and used the Bible to defend owning slaves. If someone is pointing out the latter issue, we really cannot defend this. It is true that in the past people have used the Bible to defend owning slaves in America, and it is terrible and tragic. However, just because people have used Bible verses to defend slavery does not mean the Bible *actually* means what they twist it to mean. The slavery spoken of in Scripture is radically different from what we understand slavery to be today.

The articles above do an excellent job going in-depth as to the context of slavery in the Bible, so I would encourage you to read them to get a really good handle on the subject. Chapter 25 of Leviticus will also give good context for what the person posing the statement may have in mind. One important thing to note is that the slavery of the Bible was almost always *voluntary.* The most common reason for slavery was that an Israelite was too poor to care for his family, and so he voluntary would serve another Israelite man. God’s law mandated that after six years of service, an Israelite slave must be set free. Now, this holds true in almost all cases of slavery, but in order to maintain intellectual integrity we have to respond to the fact that *“pagan”* slaves were allowed to be kept permanently. Our response to this must be to look at how God commanded slaves to be treated. The laws concerning the treatment of slaves in the Old Testament are very strict. Masters were not allowed to be severe with their slaves, and a slave could be released if a master was dealing harshly and cruelly with a slave. If a man went as far as to kill his slave, the master was to be killed as punishment. In the New Testament, we see these sentiments emphasized many times. There really are almost no similarities between modern day slavery and the slavery of the Bible. In fact, slaves were often so content with their masters that they would bond themselves to their masters for their entire life—of their own free will! That is where we get the term ‘bondservant’ that the apostles often use in their epistles. It is a servant who has committed himself to the service of his master for the rest of his life, just as we commit ourselves to the service of Christ for the rest of our life.

But now let’s turn to the second part of the statement—the oppression of women. This one can be a little harder to tackle, because many people may not be satisfied with the answer we have to give. We still must give the best answer we can, while handling God’s word with integrity and honesty. The argumentation behind this statement generally lies on the Bible’s teaching of gender roles and the command for women to submit to man’s leadership. We can’t deny this teaching in the Bible, it’s a very explicit one. I believe it is, when properly understood, a beautiful teaching. The key idea to remember is that the Bible *never* says women are worth less than men, and it *never* condones the oppression of women. In fact, historically, Jewish and Christian women were treated FAR better than women from any other culture. In Ancient Greece, men kept their wives under lock and key. In Ancient Rome, it was no better. Women were not allowed to talk in public, and husbands and fathers had the legal right to kill their wives and daughters. Even today we see Christianity’s positive influence on the treatment of women. In Islamic countries, women are treated despicably. In many African countries, girls are bought and sold like any piece of property, often in trade for animals. Even the elevated and glorified Confucius said that “ten daughters do not equal one son.” Yet, in Western countries that have been largely influenced and founded on Christianity, we see women being given many equal rights with men and an acknowledgement of their equal value and dignity as human beings.

Unfortunately, explaining all of that isn’t going to suffice. What people are upset by, and what the person saying this will call “oppression” is the fact that the Bible does not teach that men and women have *totally* equal roles. Women are not permitted to serve as pastors, and wives are to be in submission to their husbands. These teachings aren’t popular, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t obey them and stand by them. Because of our sin nature, we’re not going to like everything God commands us to do. But if we sincerely desire to glorify God, and love Him with all that is in us, we will love His commands. I think the roles that God teaches for men and women are beautiful, and as with all His commands, they serve a unique purpose. When understood and lived by, they are a tangible display of Christ’s relationship with His bride, the church. We are called to submit to Him, and He treats us with immense love. The clear illustration of this is through His death on behalf of His bride. And we have to remember that when women are called to submit to their husbands, God doesn’t tell the husbands that they can just order their wives around and treat them like slaves. No, God tells men to love their wives in the way Christ loves His bride. Gender roles are not taught to allow the oppression of women, they mandate the loving, sacrificial treatment of women. And women are not inferior to men, the Bible absolutely teaches that they are equally human. Both genders made in the image of God.

In summation, the Bible does *not* teach the oppression of slaves and women in any way. When slaves and women were and are treated in a Biblical way, they are treated better than any other culture treats them. Finally, oppression is completely inconsistent with the entire message of the Bible. Galatians 3:28 says it best, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” God’s offer of salvation is open to *everyone* regardless of their gender, race, or social standing. For all people are made in the image of God, and all people are equally offered that gift.

All Things Permissible

Analyze the quote by Fyodor Dostoevsky: “If there is no God, then all things are permissible.” Dostoevsky, Fyodor, The Brothers Karamazov, 1879

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Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary