

# Apologetics in a Nutshell

By [Pastor Cathy Ammlung](#), Lutheran CORE Secretary

Not only are more people unchurched and non-religious these days; many are also proud of their unbelief. Some are outspoken in their scorn and contempt for believers, especially traditional Christians, whom they consider judgmental, ignorant, racist, misogynist, and homo- and transphobic. It's intimidating to be met with open hostility towards our faith.

Most of us have little training or experience in defending the faith of the Church against hostile critics. We need a boot camp for apologetics. Basically, *apologetics is the art of addressing objections, clarifying misunderstandings, correcting distortions or misrepresentations, and providing a well-reasoned defense of the Christian faith.* The tagline to [www.apologetics.com](http://www.apologetics.com) is, "Challenging believers to think and thinkers to believe."

Apologetics is *not* airing your opinions, winning an argument, or trashing somebody for their heretical or hare-brained beliefs! It *is* about "troubleshooting" the misconceptions, distortions, and "Stinkin' Thinkin'" that prevents a person from encountering the strong saving love of Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for the forgiveness of sins unto eternal life.

Now, many unbelievers haven't "thought through" their unbelief. They are often inconsistent and illogical. They know little about the Bible, worship, doctrines, or church history. Their idea of God is a caricature at best. But at the same time, some skeptics are fiercely convinced that Christianity is so wrong and so awful that there's no reason for them to investigate or understand it better. That means that Christians are constantly being put on the defensive. We don't believe what many atheists accuse Christians of believing, yet they aren't interested in hearing what we do believe because they already "know" it's just as horrid and false. And often we can't seem to get a word in edgewise!

Especially at times like that, remember: the most important thing about encountering skeptics – even belligerent, insulting ones – is to remember that they, too, are persons for whom our Lord Jesus suffered, died, and rose. Christ yearns to forgive, heal, and en-

lighten them, bestow faith through the Holy Spirit, and receive them into his Father's Kingdom in an eternal relationship of love, life, and joy. It's important to have this at the center of every encounter we have.

Jesus' love covers a multitude of sins, including less-than-perfect arguments. The more your demeanor, deeds, and words are centered in Jesus's love, the more likely they will make a deep impression on another person. You may not always *convince*, but your love may *challenge* preconceived notions about your faith and your God. It may begin to soften a hardened heart. Everything, including apologetics, should be led *by* the love of Jesus, and should lead *with* the love of Jesus. The Spirit can use that to lead another person to the Father's heart.