

Introduction to
Catholic Apologetics
for Kids

Instructor's Guide and Discussion Outlines

Introduction

This past year, our Catholic homeschool co-op decided to focus on truth, beauty, and goodness as our theme as we went about developing our group's plan for the year ahead. To highlight the element of “truth,” my fellow co-op mom (and good friend) suggested I teach the kids an introduction to Catholic apologetics.

I was deeply intrigued with the idea because my informal study of Catholicism several years prior had led me to convert from my Protestant roots and join my husband in worshiping the Lord through the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic faith found only in the Catholic Church. The conversion process awakened in both me and my husband a great enjoyment for Catholic apologetics.

I knew I could create an apologetics course on my own, but, as a busy homeschooling mom of four young children, I opted to simplify and buy a grab-n-go apologetics curriculum for our group's use. I was busy developing our family's personal course of study for the year ahead, and I was more than willing to plunk a few dollars on the table to save myself extra hours of work.

The problem arose when I typed in “Catholic apologetic course for kids” into the Google search box and the search yielded a big, fat nothing! I was flabbergasted to find that a basic Catholic apologetic course for kids did not exist and went back to the drawing board to create our 6 session course completely from scratch.

Over the summer, I spent hours reading, studying, and crafting what became our co-op's “Introduction to Catholic Apologetics for Kids.”

The real test came in the fall of 2017 as I implemented the course with our family's own homeschool co-op class. My class, consisting of seven students ranging in ages from seven to twelve, amazed me with the amount of material they absorbed in our short six sessions together. I witnessed them light up in class as they connected dots and began applying all those home catechism lessons. At the end of our classes, every single student was able to recite the seven scripture memory verses and give a basic defense of their faith in the course topics.

The kids weren't the only ones learning. While I've read many apologetics books, it was a whole other world to boil down those wordy chapters into concise and child-appropriate defenses and to present it to this curious group of elementary students!

The same friend who signed me up to teach the course in the first place said, “This was great! You know you should sell this thing. There are other people who are looking for this exact thing.” And so I've spent even more hours fine tuning, making my discussion outlines easier to follow, and creating more resources so this course is something any one can use in a variety of settings.

What will the students be learning?

The age of the students and the time constraints on our class made me limit our apologetics discussions to defending the Catholic faith against non-Catholic Christians (or Protestants). I chose not to tackle defending basic Christian tenets (ex. the resurrection, the existence of God, etc.) against non-believers. Firstly, in my personal experience, non-Catholic Christians are much more willing to dialogue with Catholics about faith differences. Secondly, I felt taking this angle on the class would be of most value to the young homeschool students who mainly interact with other conservative Christians.

Here is a more detailed list of what the students will learn:

- Beginner apologetics
- How to view and best interact with our Protestant brothers and sisters
- How to defend the Catholic faith with charity and gentleness
- Simple responses to challenges of faith

- Scripture memory work
- Expand upon and apply the basic Catholic theology learned in the home

Course Overview

Each class requires approximately 45 – 70 minutes and consists mainly of leader-directed discussions. Sessions are not intended to be traditional lectures, but instead a class discussion of open-ended questions and presentation of material.

There should be a minimum of 1 week between each session in order for the children to fully integrate the new material, but feel free to make the schedule and course fit your particular circumstances.

(Our particular co-op met every other week from 10:30-10:55 am, broke for Mass at 11 am, and then resumed class for another 30-40 minutes.)

Session Topics

- Session 1 - Introduction to Apologetics and Bible and Tradition
- Session 2 - Faith and Works
- Session 3 - The Papacy
- Session 4 - Communion of Saints
 - *The main focus is the saints' ability to pray for us.*
- Session 5 – The Blessed Virgin Mary
- Session 6 - Wrap-up and Review Session

Session Format

- Review previous session(s) topic and scripture memory work
- Introduce and discuss current session's topic
- Discuss and answer objections to Catholic beliefs concerning the topic
- Introduce and practice scripture memory work
- Quick session recap
- Introduce next session's topic
- (If time allows, mock challenges from previous lessons are listed at the end of each discussion outline.)

What's included in the course material?

Instructor's Guide and Discussion Outlines This constitutes the document you are reading right now. Following this Instructor's Guide you will find each session's discussion outline. You will need to print 1 copy of this document to reference during your teaching time. (Consider storing in a 3 ring binder that will become your teacher binder for the course.)

Family Handouts In the pdf titled “Family Handouts,” you will find printouts to distribute to each family involved in the course. This helps the parents know what is being discussed in class and can facilitate further conversation and instruction in the home. These handouts range in length from 1-2 pages. (You will need to print one copy per family of each session handout.)

Scripture Memory Work Cards In the pdf titled “Scripture Memory Work Cards,” you will find

scripture memory work cards that can be printed, cut, and distributed to each student to help them memorize the course's scripture. These may be laminated if desired, but it is certainly not necessary. The cards could be hole punched in a corner and strung together with ring clips, twisty-ties, string, or any other device that will keep them contained. They could also be kept in an envelope or simply bound with a rubber band. Consider having the students help you prepare the cards if your class meeting time is longer.

I would encourage you to print the entire set (one set per student) before beginning the class and then only distributing that week's cards at each class. This will prevent the students from becoming overwhelmed with what will be expected of them over the length of the course and it will help them work on solidifying just one week's worth of materials before trying to attempt the other memory work. (You will need to print off 1 copy of the scripture memory work cards per student.)

Scripture Copywork The scripture copywork (found in the PDF titled "Scripture Copwork") was something I sent home with each student, but did not require them to complete. It was another way for them to learn the material between class time, but it was entirely optional. If your class time is longer than an hour, your students may be able to complete the copywork in class. Both print and cursive versions are available for each scripture. (You will need to print off one copywork page per session per student.)

How do I prepare myself?

All the material you will need to run this course is in the course you purchased. However, in order to lead and facilitate discussion to the children's best advantage, you should do some preparation in advance.

If you are totally unfamiliar with basic Catholic apologetics, you may want to prepare before each session by reading a chapter on the session's topic in a Catholic apologetic's book. Do not be intimidated, this can be accomplished in less than a half hour's time. As long as you understand basic Catholic theology, you are fully capable of teaching this course!

What resources should I use to prepare myself?

The great thing about our modern era is the plethora of options when it comes to learning our faith. Choose the media type and resource you find the most appealing and helpful.

The other thing I would like to stress is that YOU DO NOT NEED TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. Have humility and let the children know that even you do not know all the answers to every question people may have about the faith. In fact, a greater lesson can be learned by showing them how to respond when they are challenged by something for which they have no answer. Simply say, "That is a great question. Let me look it up and get back to you!" Then follow through by taking the time to look it up and respond to them.

**One note of warning: make sure your apologetic resource is orthodox and submits to the authority of the Catholic Church. The following resources pass my unofficial orthodoxy test.*

The One Minute Apologist by Dave Armstrong

This book offers quick responses to common questions and may be just the depth of knowledge you need to give a quick answer to an upper elementary student. Each week as you prepare you could read several of the quick responses pertaining to that week's topic.

A Biblical Defense of Catholicism by Dave Armstrong

*This book by the same author as *The One Minute Apologist* will provide more in-depth*

coverage of each topic. Chapters cover such topics as the Bible and Tradition, Justification, The Communion of Saints, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, among many others. Each chapter is around 10 – 20 pages long and will give you nearly all you need to know as a layman.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Nearly every Catholic has this one on their shelf already, and it is a great place to start!

Catholic Answers (Catholic.com)

This is THE resource to go to when you need a quick and charitable answer concerning Catholic apologetics. Catholic Answers boasts a Youtube channel, radio show, and informative forums and archives on their website. Visit them at Catholic.com and type in their search box what you want to know. This is such a great resource that I even had my students memorize the website address, which, fortunately, is quite easy!

Preparing for Class

Initial preparation for class:

(Instructor Preparation)

- Read through this introduction
- Print all the discussion outlines (following this introduction), and bind in a 3 ring binder or folder.
 - You may want to tab each week's outline so you can easily reference previous material in class.
 - Consider adding each session's copywork and family handout to your binder.

(Preparation for class)

- Determine the number of families and students participating.
- Print out 1 set of Scripture Memory Cards on card stock for each student
 - Cut out each scripture memory card (laminates if desired)
 - Determine what you will use to contain each student's scripture memory cards (some options include: ring clips, paper clips, rubber bands, string, or envelope) and collect one for each student.
- Print a scripture copywork worksheet (each student will need one worksheet per session)- keep these in your teacher folder or binder to distribute at the end of every class
- Print out one family handout per family for each session- keep these in your teacher folder or binder to distribute at the end of every class

Preparation before each class session:

- Read up on the topic (see the resources listed above)
- Pre-read the discussion outline

What to bring to class

Teacher Folder/Binder (containing)

- Session's discussion outline (keep previous session outlines in your folder/binder so you can reference them if needed in class)
- Scripture copywork (one for each student for each session)
- Family Handouts (one per family per session)
- Unused scripture memory cards (bring something to bind them together for each student the first class session)

Also consider bringing

- Treats (for students who have successfully memorized the previous week's scripture)
- dry erase markers, eraser, and portable board (if there is not one provided in your class room)
- a soft ball (Throw a ball to “tag” students to answer class questions. This livens up the discussion and ensures each student's participation.)

Making the class fun!

Some people mistakenly see apologetics as a dry and boring subject. Let's make our students excited to come to class and learn! Here are a few ways to keep the class interesting.

Treats I brought treats every week and handed them out to students if they were able to successfully recite the scripture memory work or give a good defense of their faith. Some of my student treats included: king size candy bars, microwave popcorn, bags of trail mix, or a can of pop. Consider a pizza party (or some other big treat) on the last class day if the students are able to recite every scripture memory work.

Discussion I made sure the students were a big part of the class. I didn't just lecture, but mainly asked questions prying the students for their input and then steered the discussion where I wanted it to go. Remember the discussion outlines can be used as a guide only. Do not just read the outline word for word. Show genuine enthusiasm in your voice and mannerisms. Don't forget to share a bit of yourself with the class. Students will love if you share your personal experiences in defending or sharing the faith!

Silly Recitations Encourage the kids to practice the memory work in crazy ways. Say the verse like a mouse or giant. Consider having the kids write a song for each memory verse or put them to familiar nursery rhymes. If the students seem sleepy, have them incorporate some movement (jumping jacks, frog jumps, etc.) with their recitations.

Encourage questions and discussion You want your students to exhibit good classroom manners (raising their hands, not interrupting, etc.), but you also want them to feel free to share questions, concerns, and thoughts they have with the group. Encourage them to bring questions or situations to class time every week, toss a ball to encourage the quieter students to contribute, or simply call on students. Make sure your class has an atmosphere of invitation where the students feel at ease and comfortable in sharing.

(This course is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. May His Sacred Heart triumph over the division in our hurting world and may our children find refuge in His eternal love and mercy now and always.)

=Elizabeth Clare Rozycki (elizabethclareblog.com)

Lesson #1:

Introduction to Apologetics and the Bible and Tradition

(Part One: Introduction to Apologetics)

Discuss

(Discuss as class the following points.)

- How many of you have heard of the word “apologetics?”
- Can anyone tell me what the word “apologetics” means?

What are “Apologetics?”

- The word “apologetics” comes from Greek “apologia” which means verbal defense.
- Apologetics is a field of Christian theology (theology means the “study of God”) that aims to present (1) historical, (2) reasoned, and (3) other evidence for Christianity. (*Wikipedia*)
- Apologetics really means defending our faith in one of two settings:
 1. Defending Christianity against non-Christians
 2. Or defending the Catholic faith against non-Catholic or Protestant Christians
- In this course, we will mainly be working on defending and explaining our faith to Protestants.

Why do you need Apologetics?

- Has someone ever asked you about your Catholic faith or what the Catholic Church teaches? If you haven't, then you will! Reason #1 to study apologetics – so you have an answer to those who question you about your faith.
- Reason #2 - The Bible instructs us to prepare for these conversations in 1 Peter 3:15: “***Always be prepared to give an answer*** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...”

Your job during this course:

- Think about your own questions about the Catholic faith and bring these to class.
- Bring questions about situations you've run into with non-Catholic friends or family to class if you want to discuss them as a group.
- Show respect for the other faiths we will be discussing. Rude remarks or attitudes will not be tolerated.
- Share each session's Family Handout with your parents. You will receive one at the end of every class time.
- Work on memorizing the scripture memory work between sessions.
- Give your teacher grace! We don't know the answers to every question, and may have to get back to you!
- (If you find it appropriate, review good classroom etiquette: raising hands, sitting in your chair, contributing to class, no rough behavior, etc.)

Basic Pointers for defending your faith:

1. **Get to the heart of what the person is asking.**
 - Objections to our faith will be worded differently, and it is our job to get to the real issue.
 - Plan on being a detective if you want to defend your faith well.
2. **If you don't know an answer to someone's question, tell them you will get back to them.**
 - Go home and ask your parents and then don't forget to get back to the person with your newfound answer!
 - Catholic.com forums and articles are a reliable place to learn more!
3. **Ask the Holy Spirit for help.**
 - Do we all have the Holy Spirit? (YES!)
 - When did you receive the Holy Spirit? (Answer: Baptism and it is also strengthened at Confirmation.)
 - The Holy Spirit will help us find the right words for the right person.
4. **Pray** for the person with whom you are discussing the faith.
 - Offer up a prayer for them during your conversation, but also afterwards.
5. **Don't be afraid to ask the other person questions too!**
 - This is a great way to show interest in them and is another tactic apologists use to expose holes in people's reasoning.
6. The second part of 1 Peter 3:15-16 is also important to remember: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. *But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience*, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."
 - Apologetics is not about arguing with someone we disagree with - it should be a Holy Spirit-guided discussion.
 - We will never win anyone to the Catholic faith by rudeness or disrespect!
 - Note: All class discussion will be respectful of the varying faiths with whom we disagree. Rude remarks or attitudes will not be permitted.

Part Two: The Bible and Tradition

Introduction to the Bible and Tradition

- Does anyone know what "Tradition" means in the Catholic faith?
 - *(If students are stumped, discuss family traditions as a beginning point.)*
 - Tradition means how our Catholic faith was handed on by "word of mouth" - another word for this is "orally."
 - Sometimes you will hear this called Big "T"-tradition.
- What about the Bible?
 - As Catholics, we believe our faith was handed on in two ways:
 1. Written and
 2. Word of mouth.
 - The Bible is the "written" form of our faith and Tradition is the "word of mouth"

How is this Catholic belief different than most other Christians?

- Most Protestant Christians use the Bible as their sole (or only) rule of faith (during the Reformation this was termed “Sola Scriptura”).
- Since Protestants (other Christians who disagree with Catholicism) place so much importance in the Bible, it is a good idea to use the Bible to discuss our faith with them.
 - Even while doing so, we should remember *we* base our beliefs as Catholics on the Bible *and* Tradition.
- **The Bible is still very, very important to Catholics**
 - St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ.”
 - This is why we will be memorizing scripture as part of this class.
 - Our Catholic faith cannot teach anything that contradicts scripture.
- Using the Bible to discuss our faith is the **foundation and first principle** for apologetic discussions between Catholics and non-Catholic Christian denominations.

Objections to Tradition:

(Remember that arguments against our faith can be worded differently. Here are several different ways people may argue against the Catholic belief in the Bible and Tradition.)

- **Everything God wants us to know is in the Bible.** OR.
- **God only speaks to us through the Bible.** OR.
- **Catholics teach things that are not in the Bible.**
 - Nowhere in the Bible does it claim to be the only thing we need to follow Jesus.
 - Introduce Bible Memory Work Verse #1: “Stand firm and hold fast the traditions you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15
 - This verse shows us that tradition was an important part of the faith from the beginnings of the early church.
 - There is no “divinely inspired table of contents.”
 - This means that men had to decide what books were in the Bible. The Bible did not fall down from heaven with all the good books included.
 - The list of books that make up the Bible was man-made. No where does the Bible tell us exactly what books should be included.
 - In fact, the canon (the “canon” means the books that make up the Bible) was strongly debated until 367 AD.
 - This means the “Bible alone” was unworkable for over 300 years since Jesus' death.
 - The first book of the New Testament was not written until around 20 years after Jesus' death, so the early church didn't have a Bible to follow!
 - Catholics cannot teach anything contrary to scripture. Tradition is always in harmony with the Bible.
 - Some Catholic theology is not found in the Bible (like the Immaculate Conception), but it does not contradict scripture.
- **Colossians 2:8 says not to follow “the traditions of men,” but Catholics believe man-made traditions.**
 - A great answer to this is our Bible Memory Work Verse #1: The Bible also says, “*Stand*

firm and hold fast the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15

- Jesus was condemning the corruption of the pharisees.
- Colossians 2:8 reads, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. “ (New American Standard Bible)
 - As Catholics we believe that we are holding the traditions of Christ as He handed them on to His followers through the apostles and tradition.
- **I can read the Bible and decide for myself what to believe.**
 - Without an authoritative voice (as Catholics we call this Holy Spirit guided voice of the Church the “magisterium” or “tradition”), error and division are inevitable.
 - The leaders of the Reformation argued about such things as the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist from the very beginning of their separation from the tradition of the Catholic faith because they lacked this God-given authority.
 - There are now an estimated 33,000 denominations worldwide.
 - This shows how we need help to interpret the Bible. (As Catholics, we believe this help is given through the Holy Spirit speaking through the Church.)
 - Many protestants dispute the authority of the pope and the Catholic faith, but when we interpret the Bible on our own, we inevitably become our own pope.
 - Introduce Bible Memory Work Verse 2: *“He who hears you, hears me. And he who rejects you, rejects me. And he who rejects me, rejects Him who sent me.” Luke 10:16*
 - Historically, many people were illiterate (781 million worldwide even today).
 - The majority of people throughout history were unable to read or interpret the Bible themselves.
 - Bibles were not readily accessible until the invention of the printing press in the 1440.

Practice this week's Bible memory work:

(NOTE TO THE TEACHER: First recite the entire verse to the students and then break the verse into chunks to help them memorize. If a white board or chalkboard is available, write the verses on them.

As students practice reciting the verses, challenge the students by gradually erasing the words.

Alternatively, write words from the verses on index cards and tape them on the wall, removing them as you practice. Repeat the verses several times before moving on.)

- *“Stand firm and hold fast the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15*
 - This scripture shows the two methods of handing on the faith that Catholics trust (oral and written).
- *“He who hears you, hears me. And he who rejects you, rejects me. And he who rejects me, rejects Him who sent me.” Luke 10:16*
 - Jesus told his disciples this, who then handed on the faith through their words and through the ages by apostolic succession. Jesus is telling us to trust the authority he placed in the Church to lead His followers.

Practice defenses in small groups

- Are there any questions?
- Break the class into small groups (2-4 people per group) and have them practice defending the Bible and Tradition to one another or simply discuss what was learned.
- Come back to big group and have girls challenge boys or challenge individuals to defend the Bible and Tradition using one of the following challenges:
 - “Everything God wants us to know is in the Bible.”
 - “God only speaks to us through the Bible. “
 - “Catholics teach things that are not in the Bible.”
 - “Colossians 2:8 says not to follow “the traditions of men,” but Catholics believe man-made traditions.”
 - “I can read the Bible and decide for myself what to believe.”
- (Refer to the discussion under “Objections to Tradition” of this class session for possible arguments students may use in support of the Catholic position.)

Introduce next week's topic: Faith and Works

- Next session we will be covering Faith and Works – bring questions to class!

Distribute:

- Lesson #1 Family Handout (one per family)
- Scripture Memory Copywork
- Scripture Memory Cards #1 and #2

Lesson 1 Family Hand-out:

Intro to Apologetics and the Bible and Tradition

Basics of Apologetics:

- **Remember to get to the heart of what the person is asking.** Objections are worded differently- get to the core issue they are trying to ask you.
- **If you don't know an answer to someone's question, tell them you don't know and then get back to them with an answer.**
- Pray for the person and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit.
- The second part of 1 Peter 3:15-16 is important to remember: *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. **But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.**”*
- **Ask the other person questions too!**

The Bible AND Tradition:

Catholics believe our faith is handed on through scripture AND tradition.

- Without an authoritative voice (magisterium, tradition), error and division are inevitable.
 - The leaders of the Reformation argued about such things as the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist from the very beginning of their separation from the Catholic faith.
 - Lack of authority has resulted in the estimated 33,000 denominations worldwide today.
- Historically, the majority of people were illiterate (781 million worldwide even today) and ultimately unable to read and interpret the Bible themselves.
- Bibles were not readily accessible until the invention of the printing press in the 1440.
- The first book of the New Testament was not written until around 20 years after Jesus' death and the canon of the New Testament was strongly debated until 367. How did an early Christian determine their beliefs?
- (Ask the class leader for a copy of our discussion outline if you are interested in learning more.)

To work on:

The children were encouraged to memorize the following two scripture verses. Consider encouraging review of the assigned verses. Your child was sent home with copywork and scripture memory cards to help them learn the verses. It is not necessary that your child complete the copywork, but please bring the scripture memory cards back to each class. (Students will be given new copywork and assigned new memory work during each class session.)

- *“Stand firm and hold fast the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.”* 2 Thessalonians 2:15
- *“He who hears you, hears me. And he who rejects you, rejects me. And he who rejects me, rejects Him who sent me.”* Luke 10:16

*Additional Bible verses on Tradition for family reading and discussion: 1 Corinthians 11:2, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2 Timothy 2:2.