



Psychological Apologetics

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Psychological Apologetics

- ▶ Demonstrates the truth of Christianity through human psychological makeup.
- ▶ Focuses on emotional and spiritual needs rather than scientific, historical, or rational evidence.
- ▶ Targets the heart and will, addressing inner spiritual needs (instead of the mind).



Psychological Apologetics

- Objective: Demonstrates the truth of Christianity through human psychological makeup.
- Differentiation: Focuses on emotional and spiritual needs rather than scientific, historical, or rational evidence.
- Appeal: Targets the heart and will, addressing inner spiritual needs.

Inward Look

- ▶ I am broken, and I will never truly be happy and thrive until I receive Jesus as my personal Savior.



Ways to Understand Psychological Apologetics

Inward Look:

I am broken, and I will never truly be happy and thrive until I receive Jesus as my personal Savior. Christianity best describes what's going on inside of me. Therefore, Christianity is true.

Many believe in the Christian faith because it mirrors their intrinsic feelings of emptiness, brokenness, and an unquenchable desire for something more.

What specifically resonates with people?

- **Inability to Find Lasting Happiness:** Despite various pursuits of happiness through wealth, success, relationships, or experiences, many people find that these things do not provide lasting satisfaction. This can make the promise of enduring joy in Jesus compelling.
- **Personal Experience of Brokenness:** Many people can relate to the feeling of being "broken" or incomplete in some way. This personal experience can make the Christian message of healing and wholeness through Jesus resonate deeply.
- **Recognition of Personal Sin:** The Christian teaching that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23) resonates with our personal awareness of moral failings. This can make the offer of forgiveness and transformation through Jesus appealing.
- **Experience of God's Love:** Experiencing God's love, often through the kindness of other Christians, can convince people of the truth of Christianity. This love can be seen as a remedy for the brokenness they feel.
- **The Hope of Eternal Life:** The promise of eternal life with God, where every tear will be wiped away (Revelation 21:4), can be a powerful antidote to the fear of death and the brokenness of this world, convincing people of the truth of Christianity.

Outward Look

- ▶ The Bible's description of this fallen world is the most accurate one we have. Therefore, Christianity is true.



Ways to Understand Psychological Apologetics

Outward Look:

The Bible's description of this fallen world is the most accurate one we have. Therefore, Christianity is true.

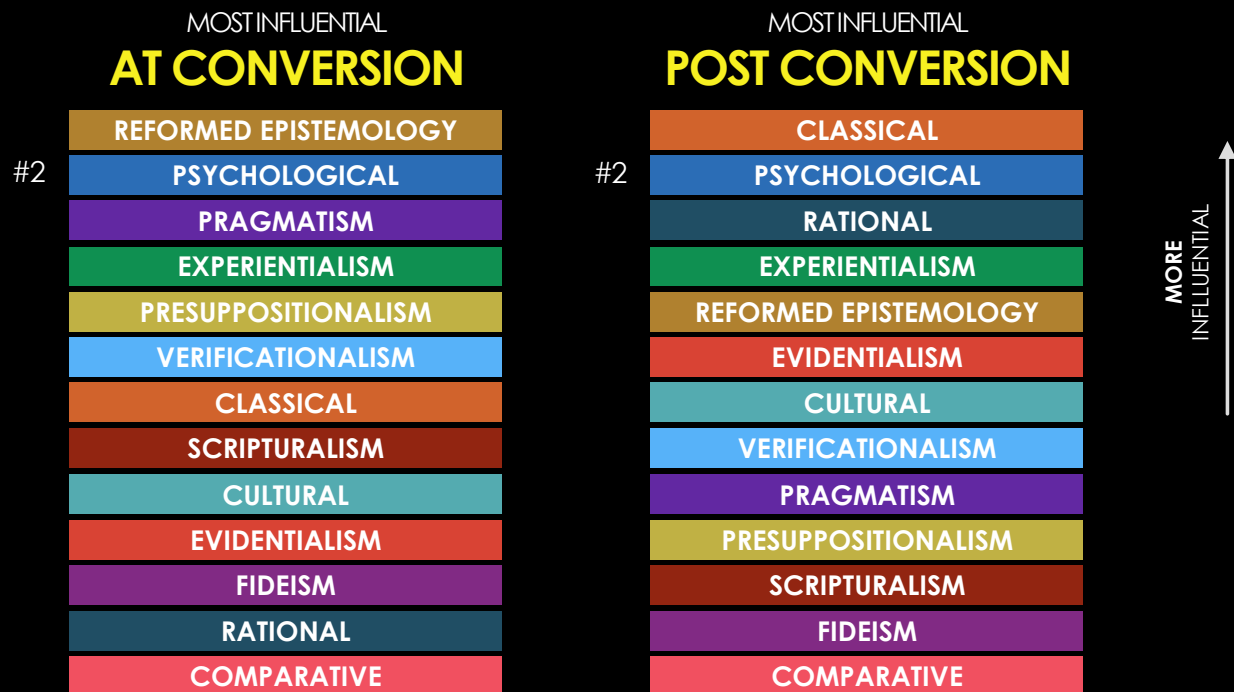
What specifically about human nature and the Bible's description of it convinces people that Christianity is correct?

- **Innate Sense of Morality:** The Bible's description of humans having an inherent sense of right and wrong aligns with our everyday experiences. This moral law within us points to a Moral Lawgiver, which is consistent with the Christian understanding of God.
- **Experience of Guilt and Need for Forgiveness:** The Bible's depiction of humans as morally flawed and in need of forgiveness aligns with our personal experiences of guilt and the desire for reconciliation. This points to the need for a Savior, fulfilled in the Christian message through Jesus Christ.
- **Universal Longing for Purpose:** The Bible presents a clear purpose for human life—to love and serve God and others. This resonates with the universal human longing for meaning and purpose, suggesting that Christianity provides a satisfying answer to our existential questions.
- **Desire for Love and Belonging:** The Bible describes God as love and humans as created for relationship with God and others. This aligns with our deep-seated desires for love, acceptance, and community, suggesting that Christianity speaks to fundamental human needs.
- **Recognition of Human Dignity:** The Bible's assertion that all humans are made in the image of God affirms the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. This resonates with our intuitive recognition of human rights and equality.
- **Existence of Suffering:** The Bible does not shy away from the reality of human suffering,

but provides a framework for understanding and navigating it--e.g., the Fall, subsequent sinfulness of humankind, and our need for redemption, future restoration. This aligns with our experiences of pain and hardship, suggesting that Christianity offers a realistic and hopeful perspective on suffering.

- **Desire for Justice:** The Bible's teachings on God's justice align with our innate desire for fairness and accountability. This suggests that Christianity provides a satisfying answer to our longing for justice in the face of wrongdoing.
- **Yearning for Eternity:** The Bible speaks of eternal life, which resonates with our common human intuition that death is not the end. This points to the Christian hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Statistics



Statistics

Psychological apologetics was the second highest apologetic at conversion and post conversion for half the participants. This makes it a very strong apologetic.

How many times did an apologetic appear in the 90th percentile (top 10%)?

Most Influential At Salvation:

1. ReformedEpist 63%
2. **Psychological 49%**
(Psychological appeared in top 10% of scores for a participant at conversion 498 out of 1023 times)
3. Pragmatism 35%
4. Experientialism 27%
- Presuppositional 15%
5. Verificationalism 14%
6. Classical 13%
7. Scripturalism 13%
8. Cultural 9%
9. Evidentialism 2%

Most Influential Post Conversion:

1. Classical 57%
2. **Psychological 48%**
(Psychological appeared in top 10% of scores for a participant post conversion 489 out of 1023 times)
3. Rational 28%
4. Experientialism 22%

- ReformedEpist 21%
- 5. Evidentialism 17%
- 6. Cultural 16%
- 7. Verificationism 10%
- 8. Pragmatism 9%
- 9. Presuppositional 4%

A Note About Percentiles

It is possible for a participant to have two or more apologetics with the same highest rank value and/or lowest rank value. For example, a candidate could have a top score of 11.0 for both Experientialism and Psychological Apologetics. I use percentiles to accommodate for this. The 100th percentile are the highest-ranking apologetics for a participant. The 90th percentile are those apologetics that were in the top ten percent. The 25th percentile are in the bottom twenty-five percent.

Biblical Basis

► Woman at the Well



Biblical Basis

Woman at the Well

In John 4:1-26 we see the idea of "living water" that Jesus offers the Samaritan woman. In this passage, Jesus engages in a conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well. While the woman comes to draw physical water, Jesus introduces the concept of "living water" that can quench spiritual thirst forever:

"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'" (John 4:10)

Later, He elaborates:

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)

This conversation appeals to the psychological and spiritual needs of the woman, who has been seeking fulfillment in relationships and social status, yet remains unfulfilled. Jesus addresses her deep, inner spiritual thirst, a thirst that can only be quenched by the "living water" He offers, which is a relationship with Him and the eternal life that comes with it.

In essence, Jesus is engaging in psychological apologetics here. He doesn't begin with a rational argument, historical evidence, or scientific data. Instead, He appeals to a fundamental human experience—the feeling of thirst, both physical and spiritual—and offers a solution that only He can provide. Thus, the concept of "living water" serves as a psychological apologetic, appealing to the deep spiritual needs that all humans experience.

QUESTIONS

- In what ways do you think the concept of "living water" speaks to the deepest emotional and spiritual needs people have today?
- How can the approach Jesus took with the Samaritan woman be applied in modern conversations about faith, especially with those who may be seeking fulfillment in the wrong places?

Biblical Basis

- ▶ Woman at the Well
- ▶ Jesus appealed to hearts



Biblical Basis (Cont'd)

It Was Jesus's Approach

Jesus often appealed to the hearts and experiences of people rather than providing scientific or historical proofs for God's existence.

For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, He spoke directly to human conditions such as poverty, mourning, and hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:3-6).

These verses read:

- "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3)
- "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matt. 5:4)
- "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5)
- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matt. 5:6)

In these verses, Jesus identifies psychological and emotional states—being "poor in spirit," mourning, being meek, and having a hunger and thirst for righteousness—and attaches a blessing or a promise of fulfillment to each.

- **Poor in Spirit:** This speaks to those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy and need for God. The promise is the "kingdom of heaven."
- **Mourning:** This can be understood as a sorrow for sin or suffering. The promise here is comfort.
- **Meekness:** Often misunderstood as weakness, meekness is actually power under control. The meek will "inherit the earth."

- Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness: This speaks to a deep, insatiable desire to live a life that is pleasing to God. The promise is that this desire will be "filled."

Jesus is essentially saying that the natural longings and emotional states we find ourselves in are not ends in themselves but can lead us to a greater spiritual reality. He acknowledges the innate psychological needs within humans—such as the need for purpose, comfort, control, and moral integrity—and shows that these are not only understood but also met in the kingdom of God.

In essence, Jesus is employing psychological apologetics by appealing to the intrinsic emotional and psychological needs of humanity and pointing to how these needs find their ultimate fulfillment in God's kingdom.

QUESTIONS

- How do the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-6) resonate with your own psychological and emotional needs or the needs you observe in others?
- In what ways can the promises attached to each Beatitude serve as an apologetic or defense for the Christian faith when talking to someone who is seeking spiritual fulfillment?
- Can you think of a time when recognizing your own emotional or psychological state led you closer to spiritual truths or a deeper understanding of God's promises?

Biblical Basis

- ▶ Woman at the Well
- ▶ Jesus appealed to hearts
- ▶ Parables



Biblical Basis (Cont'd)

Jesus' frequent use of parables

Jesus' frequent use of parables is a prime example of psychological apologetics in action. Parables are not merely illustrative stories; they are designed to engage the listener's emotions, conscience, and innate understanding of moral and spiritual truths. By using parables, Jesus appealed to the psychological and existential dimensions of human experience, often bypassing purely intellectual objections to reach the heart.

Human Condition: The parables frequently touch on aspects of the human condition that are universally understood, regardless of culture or religious background. They delve into themes like justice, mercy, love, greed, and forgiveness—themes that resonate with the innate psychological makeup of human beings.

Moral and Spiritual Intuition: Parables often appeal to our innate sense of right and wrong. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the concept of "neighbor" is expanded to include even those we might consider enemies. This challenges our innate biases and invites us to a higher moral understanding.

Emotional Resonance: The emotional impact of the parables can be profound. Take the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), which speaks to the deep psychological themes of guilt, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The story appeals not just to the mind but to the heart, stirring feelings that can lead to a transformative understanding of God's grace and mercy.

Invitation to Self-Examination: Parables often leave the listener with a question or dilemma that prompts introspection. They challenge us to examine our own lives, beliefs,

and attitudes in the light of God's truth (Matt. 7:24-27).

Ultimate Fulfillment in God: By appealing to these psychological and moral intuitions, Jesus points us toward the ultimate fulfillment of these desires in the kingdom of God. The parables are, in essence, an invitation to experience the life for which we were created, a life in communion with God and others.

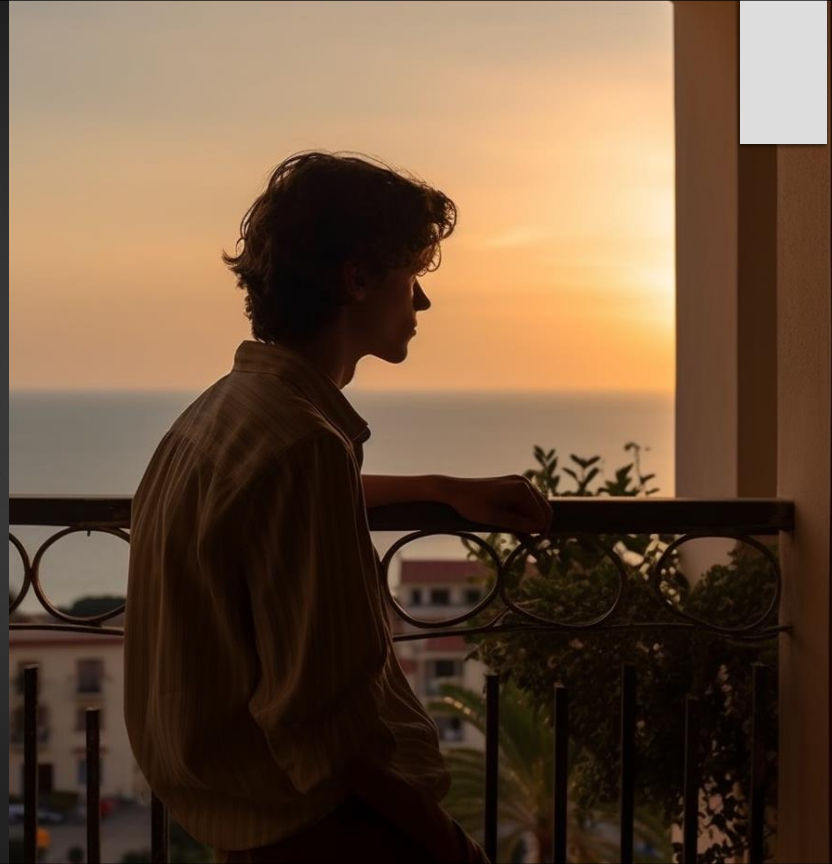
In summary, Jesus' use of parables serves as a form of psychological apologetics. He leverages the deep-seated emotional and moral intuitions that are part of the human experience to make the case for the truths of the kingdom of God. This approach makes the teachings not just intellectually compelling but emotionally and existentially satisfying, fulfilling the deepest psychological needs we all share.

QUESTIONS

- Which of Jesus' parables have had a significant emotional or psychological impact on you, and why do you think that is?
- How can the psychological elements found in Jesus' parables be used to engage people in discussions about faith, especially those who may not be moved by rational or historical arguments?
- In what ways do Jesus' parables challenge your own emotional and moral intuitions, leading you to reflect on deeper spiritual truths?

Principles Everywhere in Bible

- ▶ Eternal Longing
- ▶ Divine Rest
- ▶ Heart's Deceit
- ▶ Spiritual Thirst
- ▶ Sin Struggle
- ▶ Longing for God



Principles Everywhere in Bible

The principles found in psychological apologetics are spoken of throughout the entire Bible.

- Eternal Longing
 - Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end."
 - This verse suggests that God has placed a sense of eternity in the human heart, a longing that cannot be satisfied by temporal things. This aligns with the psychological apologetic argument that humans have an inherent longing for something beyond this life, which can be fulfilled only through the eternal hope offered in the Christian faith.
- Divine Rest
 - Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
 - Jesus' words here directly address the human condition of feeling weary and burdened, offering Himself as the solution. This supports the psychological apologetic argument that humans are in need of rest and relief from their burdens, which is found in the rest and peace that Jesus offers.
- Heart's Deceit
 - Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?"
 - This verse acknowledges the deceitful and incurable nature of the human heart, supporting the psychological apologetic argument that humans are broken and in need of a Savior. It suggests that our hearts, left to their own devices, lead us

astray, reinforcing our need for the transformative power of Christ.

- Spiritual Thirst
 - John 7:38: "The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him."
 - This verse speaks to the spiritual thirst within humans that can only be satisfied by faith in Jesus. It supports the psychological apologetic argument that humans have a deep spiritual need, and that this need is met when one believes in Jesus, resulting in a life-giving, spiritual satisfaction that flows from within.
- Sin Struggle
 - Romans 7:15-25: In this passage, Paul describes the struggle between wanting to do good but doing what he hates instead. This aligns with the psychological apologetic argument about the human struggle with sin and the need for a Savior. It suggests that even when we desire to do good, we often fall short, reinforcing our need for the grace and redemption offered through Jesus Christ.
- God Longing
 - Psalm 42:1-2: "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God?"
 - This Psalm expresses a deep longing for God, which aligns with the psychological apologetic argument about the innate human desire for a relationship with God. It suggests that just as a deer longs for water, our souls long for God, reinforcing the idea that our deepest desires find their fulfillment in Him.



Least
known...
but we
use it all
the time!

Psychological apologetics is one of the least known apologetics today. Yet, it is all around us. For example, here are some areas we see it used:

- **Sermons:** Preachers often use psychological apologetics in their sermons, even if they don't label it as such. They may discuss the human condition, our need for salvation, and how Christianity addresses our deepest needs and longings.
- **Bible Study Groups:** In Bible study groups, discussions often revolve around how biblical teachings apply to our lives and our inner struggles. This application of Scripture to our psychological experiences is a form of psychological apologetics.
- **Personal Testimonies:** When Christians share their personal stories of transformation, they are often highlighting their own experiences of brokenness and the healing they found in Jesus. This is a form of psychological apologetics, as it appeals to the shared human experience of struggle and redemption.
- **Prayer Meetings:** During prayer meetings, people often share their struggles and how their faith in Jesus helps them cope. This is an example of psychological apologetics, as it demonstrates the practical benefits of faith in dealing with life's challenges.
- **Christian Music:** Many Christian songs express themes of brokenness and redemption, resonating with listeners' emotional experiences and reinforcing the message of psychological apologetics.
- **Everyday Conversations:** In everyday conversations, Christians often discuss their faith in terms of how it impacts their personal lives, their struggles, and their growth. These discussions can be seen as a form of psychological apologetics, as they demonstrate the practical and transformative power of the Christian faith.

This is an interesting way to do Christian apologetics. But it really can build our faith, and the faith of those around us.

QUESTIONS

- Can you recall a sermon, Bible study, or personal testimony that deeply resonated with you on a psychological or emotional level? How did that experience strengthen your faith or understanding of Christianity?
- In your everyday conversations, have you found that discussing the emotional and psychological impact of your faith makes the conversation more relatable and compelling for others? Why or why not?
- How do you think psychological apologetics can be more intentionally integrated into prayer meetings and Christian music to make them more effective tools for building faith?

Advantages

- ▶ Effective
- ▶ Accessible
- ▶ Personally Relevant
- ▶ Complementary
- ▶ Unconsciously Used



Advantages of Psychological Apologetics

From an apologetic/evangelistic perspective, psychological apologetics has many pros:

- **It's Effective:** Appealing to the inner spiritual needs of every person is a legitimate and often effective way to convince people that Christianity is true. It speaks to our shared human experience and can be deeply resonant.
- **It's Accessible:** Psychological apologetics can be more accessible to people who may not be as interested or well-versed in philosophical or scientific arguments. It speaks to universal human experiences and emotions.
- **It's Personally Relevant:** Psychological apologetics often has high personal relevance, as it addresses issues of identity, purpose, morality, and meaning that are central to our lives.
- **It's Complementary:** It complements other forms of apologetics by adding a dimension that addresses the heart and not just the mind. This can create a more holistic defense of the Christian faith.
- **It's Unconsciously Used:** Many people use psychological apologetics without even realizing it, suggesting that it aligns naturally with our instinctive ways of understanding and explaining our faith.

Challenges

- ▶ Subjective
- ▶ Some Might Find Less Compelling
- ▶ Risk of Neglecting Other Apologetics



Challenges with Psychological Apologetics

Here are a few challenges with this approach:

- **Can Be Subjective:** Psychological apologetics often relies on subjective experiences, which can be less persuasive to those who prefer objective, empirical evidence.
- **Some Might Find Less Compelling:** Those who have not experienced certain feelings or longings may find the arguments less compelling.
- **Risk of Neglecting Other Apologetics:** Overemphasis on psychological apologetics could lead to neglecting other important forms of apologetics like evidence and reason-based approaches.