



# Pragmatism as an Apologetic

By Shawn Nelson

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# Pragmatism

- ▶ Argues we should accept what really works. Since Christianity is true, it works, and will produce the best life we can have.
- ▶ Focus is on practical knowledge and experience. Followers can point to times in the past when their walk with God yielded positive results.
- ▶ Goal is results, livability, putting 'feet on our faith.' Live it well and you will know it's true.



## Pragmatism

- An apologetic method is a way people come to believe that Christianity is true.
- Pragmatic apologetics is a lesser-known, results-oriented method.
- Argues we should accept what really works.
- Since Christianity is true, it works, and will produce the best life we can have.
- Argues that man is happiest when he functions the way God designed him to live and operate.
- The best way to live is to become a Christian and follow the Bible.
- People are happiest, healthiest and most productive when their laws and practices are based on biblical principles.
- Overlap with Cultural Apologetics And Psychological Apologetics

Pragmatic apologetics, a lesser-known method within Christian apologetics, focuses on the practical aspects and benefits of Christianity. This approach argues that we should accept what really works, and since Christianity is true, it works, leading to the best possible life. The starting point for this methodology is that humanity is at its happiest when living according to God's design, which can be achieved by following the Bible and embracing Christianity.

Pragmatic apologists place significant value on practical knowledge and experience. They emphasize that their methodology is not merely theoretical but rooted in tangible results. By highlighting examples of their walk with God leading to positive outcomes, they demonstrate the practicality and efficacy of their faith. This approach resonates with individuals who prioritize tangible results and seek evidence of the positive impact of Christianity in their lives.

Additionally, pragmatic apologetics posits that countries are happiest, healthiest, and most

productive when their laws and practices align with biblical principles. This perspective underscores the belief that the teachings of the Bible can provide a strong foundation for societal values and norms, ultimately benefiting the greater good.

The ultimate goal of this apologetic method is to achieve results and livability. Pragmatic apologists argue that living a Christian life in accordance with biblical teachings not only provides personal fulfillment and happiness but also improves the overall well-being of society. The emphasis is placed on the need to put 'feet on our faith' —in other words, to live out one's beliefs in a way that demonstrates their truth and effectiveness.

In summary, pragmatic apologetics is an approach within Christian apologetics that emphasizes the practical benefits and tangible results of embracing Christianity. By valuing practical knowledge and experience, this method seeks to demonstrate the positive impact of living according to biblical principles, both on an individual and societal level. Pragmatic apologists aim to show that by living a Christian life, one can achieve happiness, fulfillment, and contribute to a more productive society.

## **Compared to Philosophy of Pragmatism**

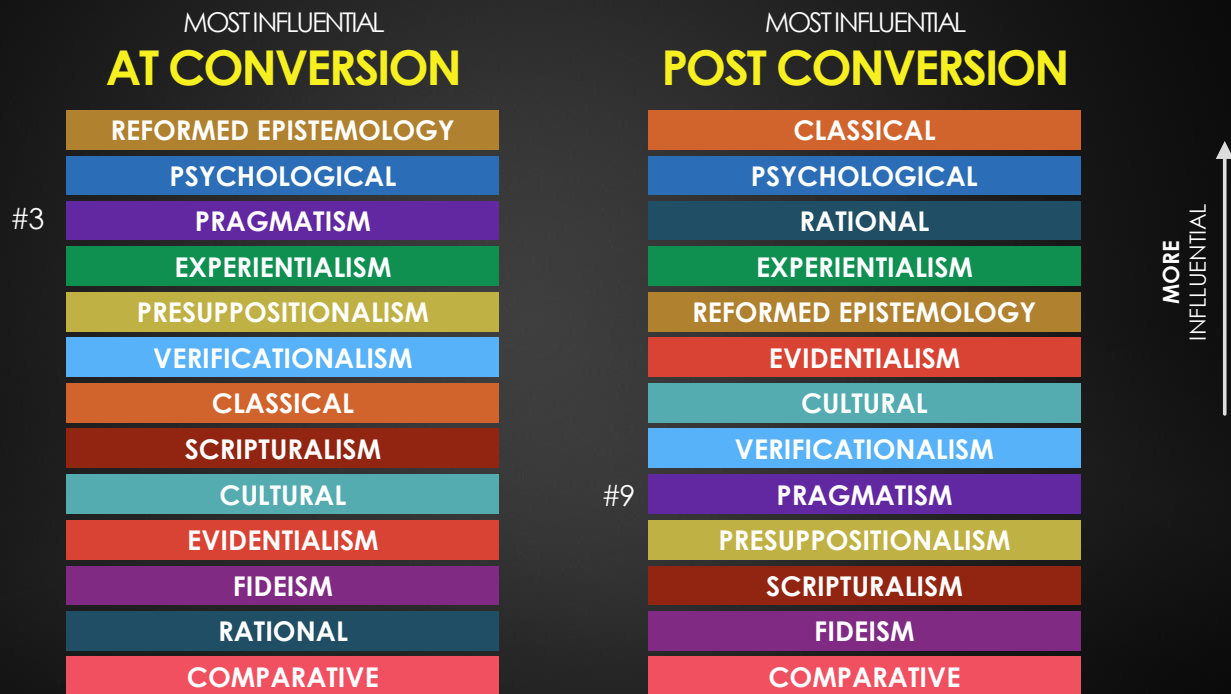
### ***Pragmatism in Apologetics:***

- Based on belief in truth of Christianity and authority of the Bible
- Emphasizes practical benefits of adhering to biblical teachings for individuals and societies
- Specifically concerned with defending the Christian faith
- Focuses on positive outcomes of living according to biblical principles
- Starts with premise that humans are happiest when living in accordance with God's design as outlined in the Bible
- Values practical knowledge and experience in the context of Christian living
- Goal is to achieve results and livability by demonstrating that living a Christian life leads to personal fulfillment, happiness, and a more productive society

### ***Philosophy of Pragmatism (19<sup>th</sup> Century):***

- Not tied to any specific religious belief
- Pragmatism asks the question: "Grant an idea or belief to be true. What concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life?"
- Meaning and truth of an idea or belief are determined by its practical consequences and workability (this is opposed to absolute truth claim of Theism).
- Evaluates usefulness of ideas or beliefs in general
- Starts with idea that beliefs should be judged by their practical consequences
- Values practicality and workability across a wide range of beliefs and ideas
- Goal is to endorse ideas or beliefs based on their practical consequences and ability to address real-world concerns, without necessarily advocating for a specific religion or belief system

# Statistics



## Pragmatism Statistics

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

### Most Influential At Salvation:

1. ReformedEpist 63%
2. Psychological 49%
3. **Pragmatism 35%**  
(Pragmatism appeared in top 10% of scores for a participant at conversion 362 out of 1023 times)
4. Experientialism 27%
5. Presuppositional 15%
6. Verificationism 14%
7. Classical 13%
8. Scripturalism 13%
9. Cultural 9%
10. Evidentialism 2%

### Most Influential Post Conversion:

1. Classical 57%
2. Psychological 48%
3. Rational 28%
4. Experientialism 22%
5. ReformedEpist 21%
6. Evidentialism 17%
7. Cultural 16%
8. Verificationism 10%

**9. Pragmatism 9%**

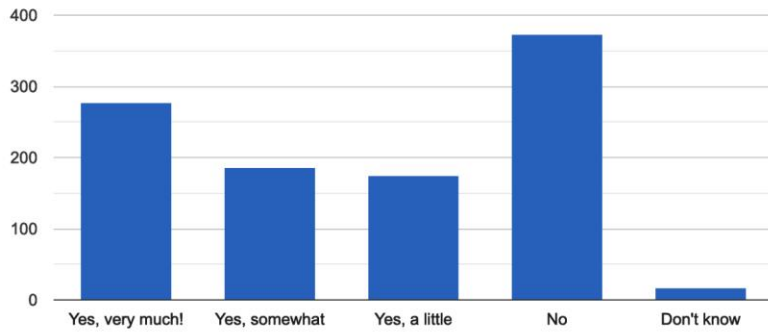
**(Pragmatism appeared in top 10% of scores for a participant post conversion only 89 out of 1023 times)**

**10. Presuppositional 4%**

**A Note About Percentiles**

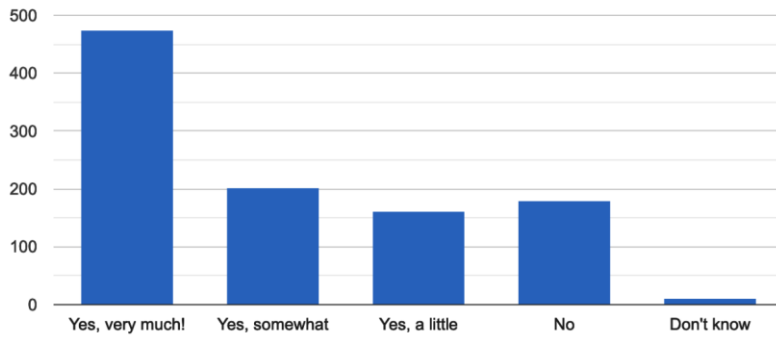
It is possible for a participant to have two or more apologetics with the same highest rank value and/or lowest rank value. For example, a candidate could have a top score of 11.0 for both Experientialism and Psychological Apologetics. I use percentiles to accommodate for this. The 100th percentile are 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.

I realized my life wasn't working and I believed Christianity was something that would improve my life.



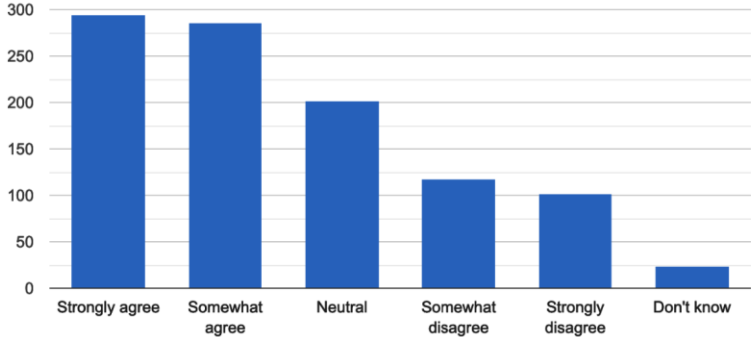
Yes, very much!	276
Yes, somewhat	185
Yes, a little	174
No	373
Don't know	17

I wanted to be a Christian because I realized Jesus can help me become the person God intended me to be.



Yes, very much!	473
Yes, somewhat	202
Yes, a little	160
No	179
Don't know	11

I'm convinced Christianity is true because it is the most practical worldview there is.



Strongly agree	294
Somewhat agree	285
Neutral	201
Somewhat disagree	117
Strongly disagree	101
Don't know	23



# Biblical Support



# Tasting + Seeing

THAT THE LORD IS GOOD



## Taste + See That the Lord is Good

Psalm 34:8 – “Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!”

You **TASTE** first and then you **SEE** second.

This verse invites us to consider the **experiential aspect of eating food** as a metaphor for experiencing the goodness of God. The verse calls us to "taste and see" that the Lord is good, a process like the sensory-rich experience of savoring a delicious meal.

Imagine the moment when you look at what seems to be a good burger the first time (e.g., Copped Kings Burgers). You lift it off the plate, feeling its weight in your hand. You bring it to your mouth, and you anticipate taking that first bite. As you chew, the flavors fill your senses for the first time, confirming that it tastes delicious. You swallow, allowing the nutrients to be absorbed into your body. This begins to satisfy your hunger and nourish your physical being. As the meal continues, you become more and more convinced of the food's goodness, leaving you with a sense of gratification and pleasure.

In much the same way, Psalm 34:8 encourages us to embark on a spiritual journey of savoring God's goodness. It urges us to take an active role in experiencing God's presence and grace, recognizing that it is through these encounters that our faith is confirmed and deepened. As we "taste" God's love and faithfulness, we "see" and are reassured of His goodness time and time again, just as we come to know the excellence of a meal through repeated, sensory-rich experiences.

**We can have faith that a certain meal will taste delicious. But when we move forward in the belief and eat, then we know that the meal is good by our experience.** In the same way, when we move forward in faith, and experience the Lord, and receive of his goodness, we then know by experience that he is good and his ways really are the best. It confirms our faith.

# Doing God's Will

TO KNOW JESUS'S  
TEACHING IS TRUE



## Do God's Will to Know Whether Jesus's Teaching is True

### John 7 – Do God's will to know whether Jesus's teaching is true

“Jesus answered them, ‘My teaching isn’t mine but is from the one who sent me. **If anyone wants to do his will**, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.’” (John 7:16, 17)

You **DO** first and then you **KNOW** second.

This says that **the authenticity of Jesus' teachings can be verified through the transformative impact they have on the lives of those who follow God's will.**

As people follow Jesus' teachings and seek to fulfill God's will, **they experience a more enriched and purposeful life, which in turn supports the notion of Christianity being true.**

The value of Christianity can be judged by its ability to improve people's lives, and that truthfulness of Jesus's teachings can be verified through the tangible benefits they provide to those who follow them.



# The Statue Incident

THE KING BELIEVED IN GOD'S  
POWER AFTER SEEING GOD'S  
PROVISION

## The King Believed in God's Power After Seeing God's Provision

**Daniel 3:24-25 - King Nebuchadnezzar came to believe in God's power after seeing God's provision.**

He ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship the golden statue, is astonished to see not three, but four men walking in the fire unharmed. He exclaims that the fourth figure looks like "a son of the gods."

After witnessing this, the King exclaimed, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him." (v. 28) And he issued a decree that if anybody spoke against their God, they'd be destroyed because "there is no other god who is able to deliver like this." (v. 29).

Nebuchadnezzar **BELIEVED** in God's power **AFTER** he saw God's Provision.

This is a practical and pragmatic approach to belief. Pragmatism as an apologetic is an approach that emphasizes **practical outcomes and consequences** over abstract ideas or theories.

In this case, Nebuchadnezzar's belief in God's power was not based solely on abstract concepts or religious doctrine but was grounded in his personal experience of God's provision. **He saw firsthand the practical results of God's power, which led him to believe.**



# Christianity Improves Lives

- ▶ Interpersonal Relationships
- ▶ Marriage and Family
- ▶ Personal Growth
- ▶ Mental & Emotional Health
- ▶ Generosity
- ▶ Community Support
- ▶ Professional and Career Life



## Christianity Improves Lives

Christianity, when applied sincerely, can have a profound impact on individuals, families, and communities.

Here are practical ways Christianity improve a person's life.

### Interpersonal Relationships

- Christianity teaches followers to love one another, fostering strong relationships and supportive communities. (John 13:34-35)
- Forgiveness: Believers are encouraged to forgive others, which can lead to emotional healing and improved relationships. (Ephesians 4:31-32)
- Acting in respect: Christians are called to be humble, promoting a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. (Philippians 2:3-4)
- Being truthful: Scripture promotes truthfulness and living with integrity, fostering trust and healthy relationships. (Proverbs 12:22)
- Patience: Practicing patience can reduce conflict and improve relationships. (Ephesians 4:2)
- Humility: Humility has been shown to promote better interpersonal relationships and foster trust.

### Marriage and Family

- Christianity emphasizes the importance of marriage and family, nurturing strong, stable households. (Ephesians 5:22-33)
- Parenting guidance: The Bible offers wisdom for raising children and creating a loving, nurturing environment. (Proverbs 22:6)
- Marital harmony: Applying biblical principles can lead to stronger, more fulfilling marriages. (Ephesians 5:21-33)
- Improved conflict resolution in families: Christian values such as forgiveness, grace, and love can help families resolve conflicts and strengthen relationships.

### **Personal Growth**

- Following Jesus' teachings encourages personal growth, self-reflection, and self-improvement. (2 Peter 3:18)
- Self-control: The Bible encourages self-discipline, which can help individuals avoid destructive behaviors like addiction. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Seeking wisdom: The Bible emphasizes the importance of seeking wisdom, leading to better decision-making and personal growth. (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- Greater financial responsibility: Christian principles such as stewardship and generosity can help individuals manage their finances better and avoid debt.

### **Mental & Emotional Health**

- Christian beliefs such as hope, faith, and prayer can help improve mental health by reducing stress and anxiety.
- Inner peace: Believers can experience inner peace knowing they are forgiven and loved by God. (Philippians 4:7)
- Joy: The joy of the Lord can uplift believers' spirits and improve their emotional well-being. (Nehemiah 8:10)
- Strength in adversity: Believers can find strength in God during challenging times. (Isaiah 41:10)
- Hope: Belief in God's promises and the hope of eternal life can provide comfort and encouragement during difficult times. (Romans 15:13)
- Sense of purpose: Christianity provides a sense of purpose and meaning, which can motivate individuals to achieve their goals and find fulfillment in life.
- Improved self-esteem: Christian beliefs such as the inherent value of human life can help individuals develop a healthy sense of self-esteem.
- Gratitude: The Bible stresses the importance of being grateful to God. In psychology, expressing gratitude has been linked to increased life satisfaction and well-being.

### **Generosity**

- Research has shown that performing acts of kindness and altruism can lead to increased well-being and happiness.
- Christians are called to be generous, leading to a more equitable society and reduced poverty. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)
- Christianity encourages helping those in need, promoting social justice and compassion. (James 1:27)

- This helps communities and those less fortunate.

### **Community Support**

- Believers are encouraged to support one another, creating strong, resilient communities. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

### **Professional and Career Life**

- The Bible teaches the importance of hard work and diligence, improving productivity and job satisfaction. (Colossians 3:23-24)
- Greater sense of purpose in work: Christianity teaches that work can be a form of worship and service, which can provide individuals with a greater sense of purpose in their careers.
- Employee/employer relationships: The Bible promotes a strong work ethic and mutual respect between employees and employers. (Ephesians 6:5-9)
- Results in more efficient and productive businesses, happier customers.
- Improved leadership skills: Christian values such as servant leadership, humility, and wisdom can improve leadership skills in both personal and professional contexts.

These qualities can attract unbelievers to explore the truth of Christianity.



# Times When People Turn to God

- ▶ God uses 'break down' times to 'break up' the structure of people's lives, so they turn to him.
- ▶ Many times, people come to church because they realize their life is disarray. They hope to change their lives for the better. This puts them on the path to recognizing their need for God.



## Times When People Turn to God

Many times, people come to church because they realize their life is disarray. They are hoping to change their lives for the better. They are seeking some life improvement. And this puts them on the path to recognizing their need for God.

God uses these “break down” times to “break up” the structure of people’s lives, so they turn to him.

- **Drug addicts** seeking sobriety and a more manageable life.
- **After an affair, unfaithful spouses** realizing the importance of prioritizing their marriage.
- **Individuals from abusive backgrounds** wanting to break the cycle for their children.
- **Parents from immoral homes** striving to create a healthier environment for their children.
- **People with a history broken relationships** seeking guidance for healthier, long-lasting connections.
- **Those who have experienced significant loss** or trauma may seek comfort and hope.
- **Those who feel lost or uncertain** about their life purpose may find direction and guidance in a belief in God/Christianity.
- **People seeking a sense of community** and belonging may find it in a church or other Christian organization.
- **Individuals seeking to improve their mental health** may turn to prayer or other spiritual practices for comfort and healing.
- **People who are searching for meaning** and purpose in their lives may find it in a belief in God/Christianity.
- **People who are seeking peace** and stability in a chaotic world may be drawn to the idea

of finding peace.

As individuals explore and experience the practical positive results of being a Christian, they may begin to develop a deeper conviction and belief in the God of the Bible. They may see the transformative power of faith in the lives of others and be drawn to a deeper commitment to God for themselves.

# Advantages

- ▶ Demonstrates the relevance of faith
- ▶ Addresses real-life concerns
- ▶ Offers hope for here-and-now
- ▶ Encourages engagement in faith
- ▶ Addresses holistic well-being



## Advantages of Pragmatism As An Apologetic

From an apologetic/evangelistic perspective, pragmatism has many pros:

- **Demonstrates the relevance of faith:** By showing how Christianity can provide practical solutions to everyday challenges, the pragmatic apologetic approach demonstrates the relevance of faith in the modern world.
- **Addresses real-life concerns:** This approach focuses on the tangible benefits of Christianity, such as emotional well-being, healthier relationships, and improved decision-making, which are relatable and important to many people.
- **Offers hope for here-and-now:** The pragmatic apologetic approach can provide hope and encouragement to individuals struggling with personal challenges, as it emphasizes the transformative power of faith in improving one's life.
- **Encourages engagement in faith:** The pragmatic apologetic approach can encourage individuals to actively participate in their faith and apply Christian principles in their daily lives.
- **Addresses holistic well-being:** By focusing on the practical benefits of Christianity, the pragmatic approach encourages a holistic view of well-being, encompassing emotional, mental, and spiritual health.





# Challenges

- ▶ May contribute to a consumerist mentality
- ▶ Potential for disappointment
- ▶ Ignores potential challenges:
- ▶ Potential for shallow commitment
- ▶ Overemphasis on personal experience
- ▶ Insufficient evidence for skeptics
- ▶ Neglects theological and philosophical foundations

## Challenges with Pragmatism

Pragmatism can be a valuable component of Christian apologetics, but it should be used in conjunction with other approaches to provide a well-rounded defense of the faith. Here are a few challenges with it.

- **May contribute to a consumerist mentality:** The pragmatic apologetic approach might unintentionally promote a consumerist mentality toward religion, where individuals seek faith primarily for personal gain.
- **Potential for disappointment:** If individuals do not experience the promised practical benefits of Christianity, they may become disillusioned and lose faith.
- **Ignores potential challenges:** By focusing on the positive aspects of Christianity, this approach may not adequately address the challenges and difficulties that can come with living a Christian life.
- **Potential for shallow commitment:** By emphasizing the practical benefits of Christianity, this approach might inadvertently encourage a shallow commitment to faith, rather than a deep and enduring relationship with God.
- **Overemphasis on personal experience:** The pragmatic apologetic approach may place too much emphasis on personal experiences and benefits, which can be subjective and may not resonate with everyone.
- **Insufficient evidence for skeptics:** For those seeking objective, logical reasons to believe in Christianity, the pragmatic apologetic approach may not provide enough evidence to convince them.
- **Neglects theological and philosophical foundations:** By focusing on the practical aspects of Christianity, this approach may neglect the importance of understanding and engaging with the theological and philosophical foundations of the faith.