

6 THE GENERAL ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIANITY

{Follow up on the class assignment from last week. Talk about the discussions that the class members had with skeptical friends, acquaintances, or family members. Total time: 5 minutes}

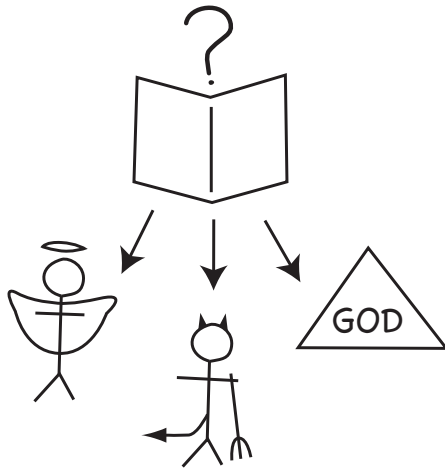
I hope you don't feel too old to play with blocks, because today we are going to use them to build a case for Christianity. How many of you think that it is important to give people a good explanation of why you are a Christian?

{Wait for response.}

What do you tell people when they ask you why you are a Christian? There's a story of a Mormon and a Methodist who were sharing with each other why they believed what they believed. The Mormon asked the Methodist, "Why are you a Methodist?" The Methodist responded, "I am a Methodist because I was born a Methodist, my father was born a Methodist, and his father was born a Methodist." "Why, that's smart," the Mormon scoffed, "What if you were born an idiot?" The Methodist said, "Then I would be a Mormon." {Pause.} The Methodist was not ready with a good answer for his faith, nor did he respond with gentleness and respect. Is that the way we should defend our faith? Is the only

reason you can give for being a Christian that you were raised a Christian, or do you have a better argument?

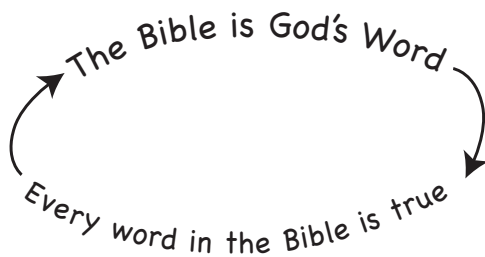
These blocks today are going to help us present a *good* argument for Christianity. With them we are going to demonstrate that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus is the only way to God. But before we do that, I want to share with you an argument for the inspiration of Scripture that John Wesley used. I think you will like it.



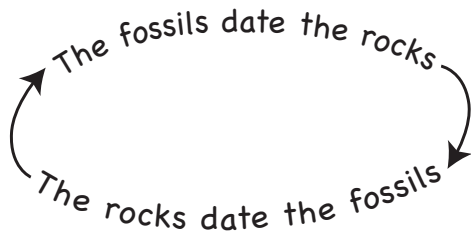
He argued that “the Bible must be the invention of either good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

1. It could not be the invention of good men or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ when it was their own invention.
2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils, for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to Hell for all eternity.
3. Therefore I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by divine inspiration.”

There are other arguments for the inspiration of Scripture I do not recommend. One is a circular argument: Someone could ask: “Why do you believe the Bible is God’s Word?” You could say, “Because, unlike any other book, every word in it is true.” “But how do you know every word in it is true?” “Because it is God’s Word.”{Diagram this. Show how the argument is circular. Keep going around the circle until the students “get it.”}



Do you see how this argues in a circle? It is the same as saying, like evolutionists, “The



rocks date the fossils, and the fossils date the rocks.”

What we need is a non-circular argument for the inspiration of Scripture and the truth of Christianity. It won't do you a whole lot of good to present arguments that are illogical—hardly anyone will accept them. You want to convince skeptics to become Christians, don't you? How would *you* argue that the Bible is the Word of God?

{Ask the students to try to refute you, the “skeptic.” Tell them you don't believe the Bible. Have them respond. This activity may show them that they could use a better argument.}

Let's go to our blocks for some help. These blocks will allow us to build a case for Christianity that is logical and convincing. With these blocks we will demonstrate that the Bible is the Word of God, Jesus is the only way to Heaven, and that Christianity is true—without using circular reasoning.

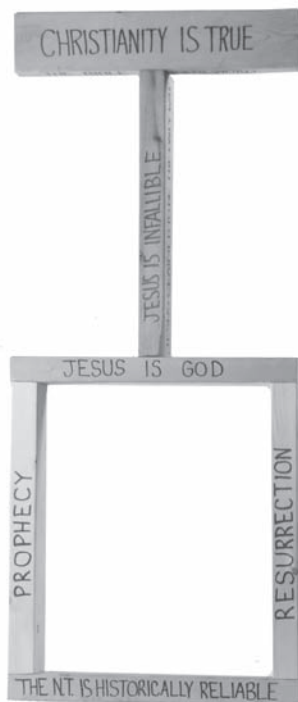
{Present the argument for Christianity using 16-inch long wooden two-by-fours. These blocks will have key words on them to show how the case for Christianity is built. The *first block* will read: THE N.T. IS HISTORICALLY RELIABLE. (The capitalized words will appear on the blocks, not the marker board.) This block will lie flat on the table. Place the second two blocks on the foundational block.

The *second and third blocks* will read: RESURRECTION and PROPHECY. These two blocks will stand on end on either end of the foundation.

The *fourth block* will read: JESUS IS GOD. It will rest on the two blocks standing on end.

The *fifth block* will read: JESUS IS INFALLIBLE. This block will stand on its end in the middle of the structure already in place. On one of the wide sides of this fifth block, write: JESUS SAID THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD, and on the other wide side put: JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE ONLY WAY.

One of the narrow sides of the *sixth block* will read: THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD; the other side



will read: JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY. This block will be placed on the top of the previous block—on its end, so that the last two blocks form a “t.” You can discuss the cross and the empty tomb, since you have a “t,” which looks like a cross and an open space under it, which represents the empty tomb. On the very top of the structure (wide part), write: CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE. Place the appropriate blocks down as you quickly go through the following monologue. Wait to have the students fill in the blanks to the premises until after you go through the argument with the blocks.}

Let’s see if we can build a case for Christianity. This first block represents the historical reliability of the Bible. This is the foundation. If the Bible is not at least generally reliable in its history, we have nothing to stand on. But since the N.T. is historically accurate, we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus rose from the dead and fulfilled many Messianic prophecies. These two pillars demonstrate that Jesus was who He said He was—the Messiah, God come in the flesh. Jesus is God. Since He is God, He is infallible. As an infallible authority, Jesus said that the Bible was the Word of God and that He was the only way to God. {Turn the block as you point this out.} He cannot be wrong. Therefore, we conclude that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus is the only way to God. This means that Christianity is true! {Turn the top block toward the class so they can see: CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE. Pause for effect, after having reached your conclusion with dramatic flair.} **Did you see what the top of this edifice looks like?** {Pause for response.} **Yes, a cross. This is the central message of Christianity, that God became flesh to die on the cross and rise from the tomb** {Make a sweeping motion out of the empty space underneath the cross, since this represents the empty tomb.} **so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God.**

I’m going to have some of you come up and present the case for Christianity, using these blocks, but first let’s fill in the blanks on our

THE LAWS OF THE LEARNER APPLIED:

The six blocks that “build” the case for Christianity will make the case for Christianity very concrete—solid. The need will be built through the objects (blocks) and the action of putting them together. The objects will also help the students remember. And since the students will be working with the blocks to practice convincing others, then the law of equipping is used as well.

outline. We will spend several weeks learning how to prove the premises of this argument. The important thing today is that we learn how the basic argument fits together.

{Now, go through the premises with the students. Wait to look up the Scriptures until this outline comes up again at the end of the elective.}

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD AND JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO HEAVEN?

Premise A: The New Testament is historically accurate; it is a basically [reliable] and trustworthy document.

Again, this is the foundation; we need to build our case for the inspiration of Scripture on the fact that the New Testament documents in particular are historically accurate. If they are not accurate, we do not have a case; if they are, we can argue strongly for the validity of Christianity.

Premise B: On the basis of this reliable document, we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus [rose] from the dead as He predicted He would, and that He fulfilled dozens of other Messianic prophecies.

During the time of this course, we will have lessons on the Resurrection and fulfilled prophecy. We will show that premise B is definitely true.

Premise C: Jesus' Resurrection and fulfillment of prophecy show that He was who He said He was: the [Messiah], the Son of God—[God] in the flesh.



Premise D: Because Jesus is God, He is [infallible]—What He says is absolutely trustworthy.

Premise E: Jesus Christ taught that the Bible was the [Word of God] (Matt. 5:18, 15:4; Mark 12:36; Luke 24:44–46). He also taught that He was the only way to God (John 14:6).

{You will look up these Scriptures later.}

Conclusion: If Christ said it, we must believe it—The Bible is the Word of [God], and Jesus is the only way to God. Therefore Christianity is true.

What have we just done?! {Pause for response.}
We have shown that Christianity is true!

If each of the premises above are true, the conclusion must be true. You notice how they build on one another, starting with the historical reliability of the Bible.¹

{Have someone come up to challenge you. Make the statement that you believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Your challenger will ask why you think so. Point to the 2nd block down and say, “Jesus called the Bible divine. He said it was the Word of God.” Your challenger will object to that by questioning why you simply accept Jesus’ word for it. You point to the next block down and say, “Well, Jesus is infallible, therefore if He says the Bible is divine, then it is.” Your challenger will say, “Why do you think Jesus is infallible?” You will point to the next block down and say, “Because He is God. If anybody is infallible, certainly God is.” Then the challenger will question the deity of Christ. You will point to the next blocks down and say, “Fulfilled prophecy and the Resurrection of Christ show that He was who He said He was—God come in the flesh.” When you are questioned concerning the Resurrection and prophecy, point to the first block and say, “The New Testament has been proven through science, archaeology, and historical research to be a completely reliable source of history. Since this is true, there is

no reason to doubt the fact of the Resurrection and fulfilled prophecy." Have your "challenger" "convert" to Christianity.}

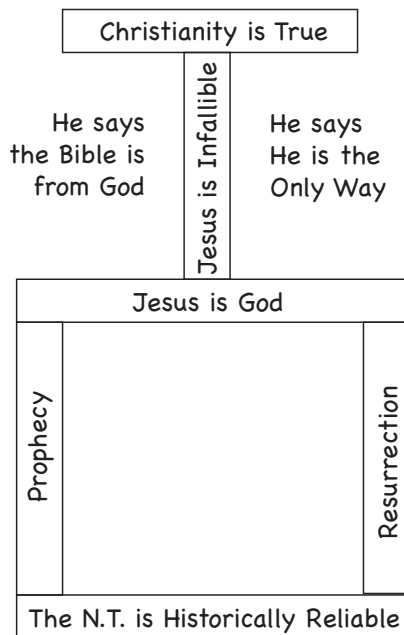
{Have your new "convert" help you convince a different person that *Jesus is the only way* (you will use the other side of the top two blocks), using the same technique. Have him do most of the responding. Help him when necessary. The other students will take notes.}

{Now have your original "convert" publicly persuade another person to "become a Christian," this time without your help. In front of the class, give him commendation and suggestions when he is done. Encourage him to keep using the arguments.}

{Now have the whole class pair up and quickly demonstrate to each other that Jesus is the only way to God and that the Bible is the Word of God. They will build the case for Christianity on paper, by drawing blocks. For the blocks that have more than one statement on them, they can write the minor points along the side. While the rest are practicing on paper, have a couple students come up front to "play" with the blocks, putting them together while presenting the argument.}

{Now come back and present the argument in 45 seconds. Have someone keep time. Make sure that the argument flows logically as you build with the blocks. Then have students come up and try to beat your time. If they do not present the argument with all the logical connections, let them know in front of the class so that the next person can do better. When a student does it more quickly than you, go through the presentation again yourself more quickly. Try to beat your students. Then they will try to beat you. Go back and forth. Then quit when you're ahead.}

But what if someone really gets tough and refuses to accept the idea that the New Testament is reliable? What if they say things like: "Well, the Bible has been copied over and over so many times that we don't know what was originally written." Or, "The stories in the New Testament are myths because they slowly developed over time. The original events were nothing like the records we have of them in the New Testament." Would you be able to



respond? These are common objections to the historical reliability of the New Testament. It is not enough just to know this general argument. You will need to know how to demonstrate that the Bible is historically accurate. During our next class, you will learn how to show someone that the Bible is historically reliable.

APPLICATION OF LESSON:

This week, find an unbeliever who will let you share with him the general argument for Christianity. Draw the blocks on paper, write in the premises, and verbally make the logical connections as you present the argument. If he says he believes something different, ask questions such as: What evidence do you have for that? Where did you learn that? What happens if you're wrong?

THE LAWS OF THE LEARNER APPLIED:

The application of the lesson will be the *Master* step of the Retention Method. It will also be the *Improve* step of the Equipping Method if the teacher takes the time to see how the students have done.

{Warn students about arguing with skeptics. Tell them that we should try to avoid the sense of competition that will make the skeptic feel that if he admits he is convinced, he has lost the argument. If possible, tell students a story about someone whom you shared this information with.}

NOTES

¹ You might point out to the students that, in starting our argument with the historical reliability of the N.T. instead of starting with the existence of God, we are assuming that the person we are talking to is open to a belief in an intelligent, holy God (Less than 10% of Americans claim to be atheistic). Tell the students that if they talk to someone lacking faith in the existence of God, they will want to share the information from Lessons 3–5.