

Introduction
to the **Art** of
Apologetics
by Betsy McPeak

TEACHER'S MANUAL SAMPLE

A self-directed high school course: This curriculum is primarily designed to be a high school course. The Student Manual is written to the student. Students watch the short lectures from the Introduction to the Art of Apologetics DVD-set, and then follow the directions in the Student Manual. Parents or teachers can check their student's answers using the Answer Key.

Worth 1 credit: Students should complete 1 lesson per week, for 30 weeks of study. In addition to completion of the Student Manual, students should either choose or be assigned 2-3 books from the For Further Study section. (See note at the beginning of that section.) A 5-page essay should be written on each book.

Help with response paper: If the student needs more instruction on writing the response papers assigned as part of the lessons in the Student Manual, which is a 5-paragraph essay, see these articles:
<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/essaywriting/a/fiveparagraph.htm>; <http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/>.

Help with 5-page essay: Whereas response papers are only 5 paragraphs long, essays on books chosen from the For Further Study section should be 5-pages long, double-spaced, 12-point font. Rather than write a book report, covering all aspects of the book, students should select one theme or argument from the book to develop, defend, and make relevant. After introducing the thesis, which should be a theme or argument the student is selecting from the book, the student should develop/expound on the thesis using quotes from the book, as well as his/her own analysis and examples. Next, the student should defend their thesis with more quotes from the book and analysis, as well as raising and answering objections to their thesis. Lastly, students should tell why their thesis matters. What are the applications and implications? (Students may choose to disagree with a theme or argument in the book. In that case their thesis would be the opposite position from what is taken in the book.) For more help, read this article:
http://www.ehow.com/how_5108429_write-long-essay.html.

Works well in a classroom: This curriculum has been used successfully in group settings. Teachers can teach a high school class or co-op group with this material, using the Classroom Suggestions in addition to the DVDs and Student Manual. Students could complete questions in the Student Manual prior to class, and discuss answers in class. For additional books assigned from the For Further Study section, teachers in the classroom setting may ask for the 5-page essay to be presented orally to the class. Alternatively, teachers may choose to ask for a book report covering all the themes of the book, to be presented to the class.

Works well in a small group: Small groups in churches and fellowships may choose to watch the DVDs together, and then work on one or more of the questions from the manual together, leaving plenty of time for class discussion.

Appropriate for NCFCA/Stoa clubs and classes: This curriculum has also been used in speech classes in preparation for the Individual Event of Limited Prep Apologetics. Teachers/coaches will want to assign speeches from the competitive event in addition to other assignments. The content of this apologetics course should give students a deeper understanding of the apologetics issues in the competition questions, and help students give a real apologetics speech addressing an opposing worldview, rather than just giving a mini-sermon.



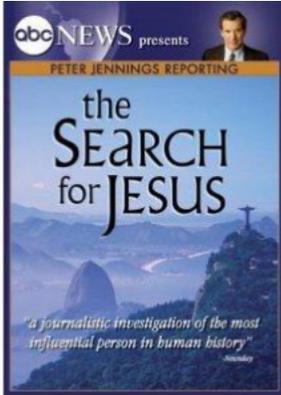
CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS (EXCERPT)

Suggested Activities:

1. **Hard Questions:** Each student is given an index card to take home. This gives them time to think. They write down the hardest question that they have about Christianity, the Bible, or God. There is no need to sign the card. They bring their cards back to class. The cards are shuffled and handed back out to students. Students find answers to the question on the card they received. You have “Hard Questions” day at the end of the semester or course. Students read the questions and then give the answers that they have researched. This can be done once each semester if your class meets all year long.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

LESSON 12

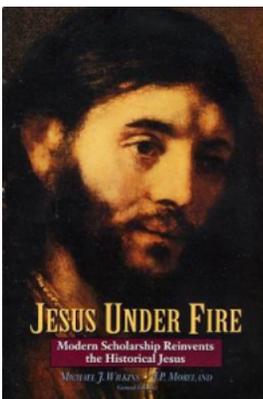


The Search for Jesus DVD by Peter Jennings

You and your students need to know what the mainline American culture is saying about Jesus. ABC aired investigative journalist Peter Jennings' documentary *The Search for Jesus* on prime-time television, drawing 16.6 million viewers. The views presented in this video continue to be repeated in our culture through such venues as Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*. Four of the seven Biblical scholars interviewed by Jennings are Jesus Seminar scholars. The other three scholars also held a worldview that prevented them from believing in the deity of Christ or in miracles recorded in the gospels.

An anonymous review on Netflix:

“While the subject matter of this documentary is fascinating and certainly worth investigating, Jennings & his crew create an appallingly cynical and unbalanced picture of the historical facts surrounding the mystery of Jesus. It is clear from the very first segment that Jennings is grinding his proverbial axe. He draws fanciful conclusions from a decidedly small minority of scholars who are proficient in only a few of the many fields needed for study in order to form a reliable opinion on such an important subject. Worst of all, Jennings attempts to color viewer's opinion by showing clips of modern Christians engaged in activities that paint them as extremists or social misfits. What relevance does modern Christians singing on a bus have to the historical truth about Jesus? With this film, Jennings embarrasses himself, and makes a mockery of the field of investigative journalism.”



Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus by Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland and others

This book is an excellent defense of the historical Jesus, with chapters written by experts in their fields. If you have any doubt about the reliability of the gospel accounts of Jesus, this book will give you solid grounding. At the same time, the authors expose and refute the naturalistic presuppositions of the scholars of the Jesus Seminar. If you want to be equipped to weigh the arguments for and against the claims of the gospels that Jesus is God's only way to salvation, this book will be very helpful to you.

Amazon Reader Review on Jesus Under Fire

by "christianskeptic"

“JUF is a book that simply needs to be read by all, Christian and skeptic alike. Ten evangelical scholars come together to refute the naturalistic assumptions of the Jesus Seminar, as well as provide positive evidence for the traditional, orthodox belief in Jesus.

LESSON 12 CONTINUED

“In the introduction, Moreland and Wilkins ask: Can we know anything about Jesus? Are the biblical records of Jesus' activities accurate?; Is the supernatural possible in ancient and modern times? If the answer to these questions is 'yes', then believing that Jesus is Messiah becomes reasonable. Determining the answers to these questions requires the proper use of historiography and logical reasoning, not a vague 'faith' that has no basis in reality (after all, if Jesus never existed, believing that he did is simply idiotic). Throughout the book, the contributors emphasize the importance of truth and reason for religious belief.

“In ch.1, Craig Blomberg begins by examining the methodology of the Jesus Seminar and finds it lacking. He then provides evidence to support the historical reliability of the gospel accounts. In Ch.2, Scot McKnight takes a look at the history of Jesus scholarship and the varying descriptions that have been offered (Jesus as Sage or Social Revolutionary). He goes on to sketch a view of Jesus based on broad scholarly consensus.

“In ch.3, Darrell Bock looks at the words of Jesus. Are the words ascribed to Jesus exact quotes (ipissima verba)? Or are they 'his very voice' (ipissima vox)? He draws a distinction between having the precise words of Jesus and having his voice (the intent and meaning) in an accurate summary. In Ch. 4, Craig Evans presents a case for the authenticity of the deeds of Jesus as recorded in the gospels. In Ch.5, Gary Habermas' focus is on whether Jesus performed miracles. In his defense of those miracles, he considers the influence of one's worldview. The Jesus Seminar holds a naturalistic worldview where miracles are anathema. He then shows that the historical evidence itself vouches for the authenticity of Jesus' miracles.

“In Ch.6, William L. Craig tackles the big question: Did Jesus rise from the dead? He provides three lines of evidence - 1) the empty tomb, 2) the postmortem appearances of Jesus, and 3) the origin of the disciples' belief in Jesus' resurrection. He then gives a slew of evidence supporting each of the three. He concludes that the combined evidence meets the criteria that historians consider in testing a historical hypothesis. In Ch.7, Douglas Geivett addresses the question of Jesus in light of our pluralistic society. He appeals to the importance of careful, rational assessment of a religious truth claim regardless of how that religious truth claim makes you feel. In Ch.8, Edwin Yamauchi looks at the evidence of Jesus in extra-biblical sources, highlighting their usefulness as well as their limitations.

“The text is easy to understand. It contains plenty of scholarly content but doesn't assume that erudition is the sole criteria for understanding the arguments in the book. If you're the type of reader who enjoys flipping to the back to read the chapter's endnotes, you'll love this book (I'd estimate that almost a fifth of Craig's chapter is written in his endnotes). If a skeptic/agnostic friend were to ask me why I believe in Jesus, I'd give her this book. If a Christian friend were to ask me if there were any good books to help bolster her faith, I'd give her this book.

(In case you missed the point, buy this book!)”

LESSON 12: USING PRESUPPOSITIONALISM

Watch Segment 12 of the DVD set: “Introduction to the Art of Apologetics”



1. **Watch** this short video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQCubX2FzUc>
Are the scholars of the Jesus Seminar representative of New Testament scholarship?

2. **Watch** this short video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuSQLIkFV-o>
Why does Norman Geisler say that the Jesus Seminar views are unreliable?

1. The Jesus Seminar is based on a false presupposition that miracles do not happen.
2. The Jesus Seminar perspective that the gospels are mythological accounts conflicts with the accepted early dating, and therefore close proximity of the gospel accounts to the actual events. There was not enough time for myths to develop.

3. **Read** this short article: <http://christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t009.html>.

What 4 reasons are given that the accounts of Jesus in the gospels are not myths?

1. There are no accounts of myths developing in as short a period of time from the historical event to the writing of the gospels.
2. The disciples' eyewitness accounts were written while opponents were alive and could have refuted their claims, so the disciples would not have easily gotten away with such distortion.
3. The gospel accounts do not have the same characteristics of Greek myth or Jewish legend, such as having women as the primary witnesses of the resurrection.
4. It was counter to Jewish culture to confuse deity with humanity.

4. Even though the Jesus Seminar scholars are not well respected in many scholarly circles, their distorted portrait of Jesus continues to have a significant influence in American culture.

Well-known ABC journalist Peter Jennings' documentary, *The Search for Jesus*, aired on prime-time television in 2000, drawing 16.6 million viewers. Watch this video response to Jennings' documentary: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drLadddwBnk>

Do you think that Jennings offered a fair investigative documentary? Why or why not?
(Opinion question.)

5. **Look** over the “Extra-Biblical Historical Evidence for the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus”: <http://www.westarkchurchofchrist.org/library/extrabiblical.htm>

6. What ancient non-Christian sources affirm the historicity of Jesus? Include when these historical figures lived and a brief description of who they were.

(Write on the back of this sheet of paper if you are writing your answers by hand.)

Copied from the website:

1. Cornelius Tacitus (55-120 AD), "the greatest historian" of ancient Rome
2. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas, chief secretary of Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD)
3. Flavius Josephus (37-97 AD), court historian for Emperor Vespasian
4. Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor around 112 AD
5. Trajan (Roman Emperor from 98 to 117 AD), in reply to Pliny
6. Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD), in a letter to Minucius Fundanus, the Asian proconsul
7. The Jewish Talmud, compiled between 70 and 200 AD
8. Lucian, a second century Greek satirist
9. Mara Bar-Serapion, of Syria, writing between 70 and 200 AD from prison to motivate his son to emulate wise teachers of the past

LESSON 12 CONTINUED



7. What extra-Biblical ancient Christian sources affirm the historicity of Jesus? Include the date and a brief description of the source.

(Write on the back of this sheet of paper if you are writing your answers by hand.)

Copied from the website:

1. Clement, elder of Rome, letter to the Corinthian church (95 AD)
2. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, letter to the Trallians (110-115 AD)
3. Ignatius, letter to the Smyrneans (110-115 AD)
4. Ignatius, letter to the Magnesians (110-115 AD)
5. Quadratus, to Emperor Hadrian about 125 AD
6. (Pseudo-)Barnabas, written 130-138 AD
7. Justin Martyr, to Emperor Antoninus Pius about 150 AD
8. Justin Martyr, in Dialogue with Trypho, around 150 AD

8. The Jesus Seminar claims that the gospels are not objective biographies, but that they are preaching documents meant to persuade. Listen to this segment of J.P. Moreland's "The Search for the Historical Jesus": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9WdtB9RhoI>

How does J.P. Moreland respond to the claim that the gospels are not objective, eye-witness accounts? (Write on the back of this sheet of paper if you are writing your answers by hand.)

J.P. Moreland first states that there is no valid reason why a document cannot be both biographically sound and persuasive at the same time. He shows how the first 12 chapters of the book of Acts are in the form of a sermon consisting of eyewitness details that would have been given in a sermon. The apostles were intent on communicating the historical, biographical, eye-witness accounts of Jesus as a basis for belief. But there is no reason that this dismisses the reliability of the accounts. Rather, it strengthens the reliability, since the disciples would not believe or want others to believe based on myths or fairytales.

9. What presuppositions would a Jesus Seminar scholar have to change in order to believe that the Bible is a historically reliable text?

Jesus Seminar scholars would have to give up their naturalism, and be open to non-physical reality. Only a change in their naturalistic presuppositions would allow for the possibility that the eyewitness accounts of supernatural miracles recorded in the Bible are true.

Jesus Seminar scholars would also have to give up their preconceived notion that the disciples were not reporting the truth, but trying to persuade followers with myths and false accounts.



10. **Read** this article:

<http://equipu.kids4truth.com/blogs/bobsblog/archive/2006/02/25/Presuppositional-Apologetics-and-Greg-Bahnsen.aspx> and **write** a Response Paper.

(See Lesson 1, #6 for a description of a Response Paper.)