**Five Steps for Answering Any Tough Question**

When we engage in evangelism, our friends, neighbours and colleagues often have questions — *sometimes very tough questions* — about the gospel. What’s the best approach to tackling difficult questions about our faith? Do we need to learn detailed answers to *every* conceivable question? How can we ever find the time to do that? This seminar will teach a five-step approach to tackling almost any tough question — a kind of apologetic “Swiss Army Knife” — that you can use in a variety of settings. It’ll help you engage in spiritual conversations more easily, explore tough questions in an open and engaged way, and connect your answers to Jesus and the gospel more naturally.

**Andy Bannister** is the Director of Solas, an evangelism and training ministry based in Scotland. Andy holds a PhD in Islamic studies and is an Adjunct Professor at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. Andy is the author of several books including *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qur’an*; *The Atheist Who Didn’t Exist*; and his latest book, *Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?* is an accessible engagement with this absolutely crucial question. When not traveling, speaking, or writing, Andy is a keen hiker, mountain climber, and photographer. He is married to Astrid; they have two children, Caitriona and Christopher. See more at www.solas-cpc.org.

**1. Introduction**

* The world is full of difficult and challenging questions.
* They can cause many Christians to be afraid of sharing their faith.
* Or we can feel daunted at the need to learn hundreds of answers to different questions.

**2. A Five-Fold Framework for Answering *Any* Tough Question**

* Relate *(connect to the questioner and identify with them and their question)*
* Reflect *(help the questioner see the difficulties for their own worldview raised by the question)*
* Reframe *(bring the biblical worldview to bear on the question)*
* Re-Tell *(use the question to tell the story of Jesus naturally)*
* Resource *(point the questioner to ways they can explore the question further)*

**3. Worked Example #1: “How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell?”**

* Relate
	+ This is not an abstract question for many people; it involves people that we love and care about.
* Reflect
	+ The question of *hell* is wrapped up with the question of *justice*.
* Reframe
	+ The main idea for the Bible when it comes to hell is “separation”.
	+ Hell and Gehenna
	+ How do divine love and divine judgement fit together?

*I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn’t God love? Shouldn’t divine love be beyond wrath? God is love, and God loves every person and every creature. That’s exactly why God is wrathful against some of them. My last resistance to the idea of God’s wrath was a casualty of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3,000,000 were displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry. Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in one hundred days! How did God react to the carnage? By doting on the perpetrators in a grandfatherly fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrators’ basic goodness? Wasn’t God fiercely angry with them? Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God’s wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn’t wrathful at the sight of the world’s evil. God isn’t wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

* Re-Tell
	+ The Bible is not a “heaven and hell” story but far more concerned about heaven.
	+ The marriage analogy — and the consequences of human rebellion
* Resource
	+ Read: Erik Raymond, *Is Hell for Real?* (The Good Book Company, 2017)
	+ Watch: *Is Hell a Skeleton in God's Closet?* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2_lgtaQ6rc>
	+ Watch: *Solas* *Short Answers* episode 32 (‘Why Did Jesus Have to Die?’) <https://www.solas-cpc.org/shortanswers32/>

**4. Worked Example #2: “If Christianity is True, Why So Many Other Religions?”**

* Relate
	+ We live in a very pluralistic world and people may have friends or family members in another faith — so this is both an *emotional* and a *theological* question.
* Reflect
	+ Everybody has exclusive beliefs; exclusivity is not unique to Christianity!
* Reframe
	+ Is every religion *really* concerned with leading you to God?
	+ The startlingly unique claim of Christianity: only the Bible claims that the whole point of life is to come to know God.
* Re-Tell
	+ In some ways, Jesus was profoundly anti­-*religious*.
	+ Every other religion makes it about *you* (your hard work; your law keeping; your right thinking). Only Christianity reverses that pattern and makes it all about *Jesus* and what he has *done* for us.
* Resource
	+ Read: Andy Bannister, *Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?* (IVP, 2021)
	+ Read: Bruxy Cavey, *The End of Religion* (Herald Press, 2020)
	+ Watch: *Solas Short Answers* episode 27 (‘Do All Religions Lead to God?’) <https://www.solas-cpc.org/shortanswers28/>
1. Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 138-9; see also Volf’s *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*(Nashville: Abingdon, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)