

Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well The Role of Apologetics in Discipling the Next Generation

Given present challenges, opportunities, and resources, what do today's students and young adults (the next generation of disciples and church leaders) most need from apologists now? What do they (and those who follow them) need apologists to be doing with a view to the next 50 or 100 years? Problems that took 100 years to develop will likely take another 100 years to reverse; we should pray, plan, and work strategically today with that end in mind. In this session we consider together several key apologetic discipleship needs and strategies related to both short and long terms and to both broader, institutional and narrower, more individual contexts.

David A. Horner is Professor of Biblical Studies and Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. He also serves as research scholar for Centers for Christian Study, International, and as President of *The Illuminatio Project*, whose aim is to bring the light of a classical biblical vision of goodness, truth, and beauty into the thinking of the church and culture through research and communication. Dr. Horner previously served in campus ministry in the United States and Europe, as president of an apologetics ministry, and as pastor and worship leader. He holds M.Phil. (Philosophical Theology) and D.Phil. (Philosophy) degrees from the University of Oxford. He has taught at Oxford and at Denver Seminary, and was a visiting scholar in ancient philosophy at the University of Colorado. He is the author of *Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well* (InterVarsity Academic, 2011)

I. Where are we? (Understanding today's students and young adults)

A. Needs, challenges, opportunities, and strategies

All who attend this session are committed (1) to reaching young people with the gospel, (2) to discipling young people, and (3) to the value and importance of apologetics in (1) and (2). The purpose of this workshop is to work together to diagnose the needs, challenges, and opportunities we face, and to explore how to move strategically from here.

B. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)

This term is coined by sociologist Christian Smith as the worldview that characterises the majority of American teenagers and young adults, regardless of their religious tradition or allegiance. Several central European Christian workers have told me that MTD is the most accurate description of the young people they work with in their contexts as well. In any case, there seems to be enough commonality as a starting point for our discussion.

C. Discussion

1. Needs

2. Challenges
3. Opportunities

II. How did we get here? (Long-term and short-term factors?)

A. From outside: two deadly assumptions.

1. Scientism
2. “Tolerance”

B. From inside: disintegration of mind, faith, and character.

1. Mind without faith (and faith without mind).
2. Mind and faith without character (and character without mind and faith).

C. Other factors?

III. Where do we go from here? (Long-term and short-term strategies?)

Problems that took 100 years to develop will likely take another 100 years to reverse, should the Lord tarry. With the benefit of our collective wisdom, how can we pray, plan, and work strategically to most effectively disciple the next generation, as well as help prepare the soil for them and the church they will lead? (Discussion)

A. Short-term

1. Individual
 - a. Priorities
 - b. Pitfalls
 - c. Strategies
2. Institutional

- a. Priorities
- b. Pitfalls
- c. Strategies

B. Long term

1. Individual

- a. Priorities
- b. Pitfalls
- c. Strategies

2. Institutional

- a. Priorities
- b. Pitfalls
- c. Strategies

Suggested Readings:

Garber, Steven. *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years*. Expanded Edition ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.

Horner, David A. *Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Academic, 2011.

Opitz, Donald and Derek Melleby. *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness: A Guide for Students*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007.

Smith, Christian with Melinda Lunquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. (Discussion of MTD: chapter 4.)

_____ and Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. (Especially chapters 5 and 6.)

Willard, Dallas. *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2009