

How to Train the Next Generation of Apologists

Communicating and defending the gospel effectively in a post-Christian multi-faith society like Europe today is a considerable challenge requiring courage, compassion, competence, clarity, and cultural sensitivity. It also is a task which requires many people who have been genuinely called and properly trained to have both the skills and adaptability that is required. First we need to understand the context in which we live and the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual barriers to faith. Second we need to employ the apostles' methodology - Go where the people are; Use words they understand; Give opportunity for discussion; Start from where they are at; Employ the Identify, Confront, Invite model. Third we need a proactive approach to selection, recruitment, training, leadership and personal development firmly undergirded by prayer. Finally we need training and resources that are aimed at developing hands-on apologetics skills as well as simply answering difficult questions. Mentoring, role modelling, and practice (in role play, writing, internet, and real life) should play a central part. There is no better training manual for communicating the Gospel than the Bible, and the book of Acts is a special goldmine for good guidance. This seminar will explore some of the reasons training systems fail and will look at biblical principles based on the apprenticeship model that Paul and the other apostles employed in the first century applying it to our present day. We will also look at three training courses that Christian Medical Fellowship has developed to train apologists that illustrate these principles and can be adapted for use in other cultural contexts (*Confident Christianity, Saline Solution, Answering other Faiths*).

Peter Saunders was born in New Zealand and originally trained as a General Surgeon, before serving with the Africa Inland Mission in Kenya and completing two years mission training at All Nations Christian College in the UK. Since 1992 he has worked in full-time Christian ministry with Christian Medical Fellowship, a UK-based organisation with around 5,000 UK doctors and 1,000 medical student members, first as Head of Student Ministries and since 1999 as Chief Executive. As CMF's CEO he is involved in leadership training, teaching evangelism, apologetics and ethics, medical mission, writing, editing and media work. He was a foundation member of the European Apologetics Network and European Leadership Forum. His wife Kirsty is a community pediatrician and they have three sons, Christopher, Benjamin, and Jonathan. They are members of Spicer Street Church, St Albans. www.cmf.org.uk; www.carenokilling.org.uk; <http://pjsaunders.blogspot.com/>

I. The challenge of Europe today

A. Europe's worldviews and communities

B. The qualities of an effective apologist

1. Courage
2. Compassion

3. Competence
4. Clarity
5. Cultural sensitivity
6. Calling

II. Barriers to faith

A. Intellectual

B. Cultural

C. Spiritual

III. The apostolic model

A. Go to where the people feel comfortable (Acts 13, 17, 19, 28)

B. Use words they understand ('De-jargonising' our language)

C. Give opportunity for discussion (Acts 17:1-4, 17, 18:4, 28, 19:8,9)

D. Start where they are at (Acts 13:13-51, 14:14-18, 17:16-34, 22:1-22)

E. Use the Identify, Confront, Invite model

IV. Three training packages that employ these principles

A. Confident Christianity

B. Saline Solution

C. Answering other Faiths

V. Developing hands-on skills

A. Mentoring

B. Role-modelling (See one, do one, teach one)

C. Practice

1. Role play

2. Writing

3. Social media

4. Panels

5. 'Dialogue suppers'

6. Talk and questions

VI. Developing a proactive training programme

A. Selection

B. Recruitment

C. Training

D. Leadership

E. Personal development

References to Courses

Confident Christianity

<http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/confident-christianity/>

Saline Solution

<http://www.cmf.org.uk/doctors/saline-solution/>

<http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=article&id=26179>

Dialogue in Evangelism

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dialogue-Evangelism-Peter-May/dp/1851741623>