



A WOMAN'S GUIDE  
TO KNOWING  
WHAT YOU

# Believe

HOW TO LOVE GOD  
WITH YOUR HEART AND YOUR MIND

PATTY HOUSER



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To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Without You, this book would have never been possible.  
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# Introduction

God gave every Christian woman the ability to have extraordinary faith. Most want it, but confess they don't have it. Is there a secret to extraordinary faith? Yes! I believe there is. I believe the secret to extraordinary faith is fully engaging our minds, as well as our hearts, in our faith, because dynamic faith requires a healthy balance of both.

When Moses wrote to the children of Israel, who had wandered in the desert for forty years because of their lack of faith, he wanted to remind this new generation what God had done for their ancestors, so the children could enter the Promised Land and appropriate what was rightfully theirs. In doing so, he also challenged them to love God with their hearts, souls, and strength (Deut. 6:5). However, in the New Testament, when the religious leaders questioned Jesus about which of God's commandments was the greatest, Jesus quoted Moses' words in Deuteronomy 6:5, but made a change. Like Moses, Jesus told them to love God with their hearts and souls, but then He also told them to love God with their minds (Matt. 22:37). What does it mean to love God with our minds? It means that we know exactly what we believe about the following: the Bible, God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the resurrection, man, sin, salvation, angels, Satan,

demons, the church, the end times, and eternal life. It also means that we know exactly *why* we believe what we do.

Let's face it. This is something we women are bad at. We're great at loving God with our hearts. Loving God with our hearts is easy, effortless, expected. And loving God with our hearts well is vital in order to have healthy faith. Where we fall short, however, is in clearly expressing what we believe and backing up those beliefs with solid reasons. We are easily able to say we believe in God, for instance, but are not as easily able to articulate the difference between the Christian view of God from other views of god in the culture, such as pantheism, panentheism, dualism, or henotheism. And when we state what we believe, more often than not, we give experiential reasons instead of rational ones for believing as we do. We believe God exists because we feel His presence when we are outdoors in nature. And we believe the Bible is true because we experience the peace and joy that comes from obeying its teachings.

While our experiential reasons are well founded, and may have led us quite far in our journey of faith, the question we have to ask ourselves is "Are these reasons enough?" Are the reasons enough to keep us securely grounded in our faith when it is challenged by hostile atheists? Are they enough for us to hold on to when the storms of life hit and doubts creep in? Are they enough to carry us through the times when life seems unfair, when anger, bitterness, and resentment take root in our hearts and we feel justified in giving up our faith or abandoning God? And are they enough for our unbelieving friends and family when we share Christ with them?

If we do not have more in our storehouse than experiential reasons for believing what we do, how do we respond to the Muslim woman in our book club who tells us that the reason she believes Allah is the true God of the universe is because she can feel his presence when she is outdoors? Or that the reason she believes the Qur'an is true is because she experiences the peace and joy that comes from faithfully obeying its teachings?

If we're honest with ourselves, I think most of us would admit that experiential reasons aren't enough. When we love God with our hearts in disproportion to our minds, our faith is out of kilter

with the kind of faith God wants us to have. It is like a “wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6). It is not able to survive our emotions that fluctuate from day to day. It is not able to endure hardships in life, like the loss of a parent or a terminal diagnosis for us or someone we love. It is not able to carry us through the darkest days when we are overwhelmed and feel like living life is just too hard. And it is not able to bear the pressures put on it by a culture hostile to Christianity. Good things become harmful when consumed in excess. Drinking water is essential for life, but if we guzzle too much at once, it chokes us. The same is true of our faith. Loving God with our hearts is essential for faith, but if we love God with our hearts at the expense of our minds, it harms our faith.

When we fully engage our minds in proportion to our hearts, however, our faith is balanced and in sync with the kind of faith God wants us to have. It is stable, and it allows us to always “be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have” (1 Peter 3:15). It is firmly grounded in God’s objective truth on the days when our emotions run amuck and we are prone to believe Satan’s lies instead of God’s truth. It reminds us of the absolute certainty of Jesus’ resurrection, so we remember that God’s power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power available to us today. It defends God’s existence to us when we are in the midst of depression and it feels like He doesn’t exist. And it equips us to stand up to the forces a relativistic, religiously pluralistic, Christless, and hostile culture puts on it. Good things thrive when properly balanced with other good things. If we drink enough water, eat well, exercise regularly, and get plenty of rest, our bodies will be healthy and strong. The same is true of our faith. If we love God with our minds in equal proportion to our hearts, our faith will be healthy and strong. It will be vibrant and dynamic. It will be resilient and enduring. It will no longer be ordinary. It will be extraordinary.

If you want extraordinary faith, this book is for you. All it requires is a willingness to do what it takes: lots of hard work, determination, and the courage to step outside your comfort zone

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and into a new normal—a normal in which fully engaging your head in your faith as well as your heart is as natural for you as breathing. Are you ready? I'm thrilled and honored to be taking this journey with you.

*Soli Deo Gloria,*  
Patty

# One

## Yikes—“What is it?”

I'll never forget the day it happened. I was heading upstairs, when I glanced out the window next to my front door and saw them. Four furry little heads stumbling around in my flower bed stopped me dead in my tracks. At first I was excited. I thought somebody's house cat had given birth to a litter of kittens underneath my house. This prospect delighted me. I'm a cat lover and proud owner of two Maine Coons, Jack and Felix. I'd like more, but my husband has made it clear that our house's cat limit is, and will always be, only two. I've abided by this strict rule for eighteen years. I'm an obedient woman. But what could he say if a momma cat decided to become a squatter on our property and make her kittens' new home our home? Surely he wouldn't make me toss these helpless creatures out into the wild with no place to go, would he?

With this thought in my mind, at the exact moment I was ready to go outside, one of the “kittens” looked at me. I froze in disbelief. It wasn't a kitten. I didn't know what it was, but it definitely wasn't a kitten. This beast had a square nose and big ears. It looked feral,

uncontrollable, rabid. Was it a raccoon? A woodchuck? I had no idea. What I did know was that being unable to identify this pack of whatever *they* were, living underneath my house, made me afraid—afraid to go out my front door, afraid to walk in my yard, afraid to walk down the street to the mailbox to get my mail. What if their mother attacked me? I could see the headline: “Suburban Housewife Viciously Attacked While Getting Mail.”

A few days later, I mustered the courage to get the mail. Before that, I had made my husband do it. But I was expecting a package. I didn't want to wait for him to get it for me. What can I say? I'm an impatient woman who has a hard time delaying gratification. So I shot up a few prayers asking for courage and protection and dashed off to the mailbox through my garage. On the way back, I saw a hefty red fox propped up on its elbows on my lawn staring at my front porch. Terrified, and with my heart pounding in my chest so loudly I could hear it beating in my ears, I sprinted back into the house, praying that my headline wasn't about to come true. Once inside, I darted to the window by my front door to see what the fox was looking at. Then I saw those four “unidentified” creatures jumping on each other's backs, playing. Then it hit me. The beasts living under my front porch were kits, not kittens, and the fox on my lawn was their mother, a vixen. When the mystery was solved, my fear went away. Now I had a different problem. Now I had to figure out how to get rid of them.

## Fearing the Beast

Over the years, I've found that apologetics is for some Christian women what those unidentified baby beasts were for me. Something to fear. Some Christian women fear it because they don't know what it is. And they don't want other Christian women to know that they don't know what it is. Whenever women ask me in which field I got my master's degree or what I do for a living, and I tell them, I see in their eyes and hear in their responses *fear*. Their eyes expand like overfilled balloons about to pop as they smile at me and politely say, “How nice!” Then they walk away as though

they weren't actually expecting an answer to their question. Their fear instantly ignites the flight response. These women can't get away from me fast enough.

Sometimes they hide their fear behind pride, and tell me they have no idea what apologetics is but are pretty sure they don't need it. Here, the fight response ignites. These women don't want to flee. They go at me like a bully on a playground, with fists flying. My question is "How do you know you don't need something if you don't know what it is?" One woman told me that since the apostle Paul didn't need it neither did she, whatever "it" was. She failed to see the irony in her statement.

Occasionally, women slump forward, look down at their feet, and avoid eye contact as they awkwardly tell me they have no idea what apologetics is, as if they are divulging their most shameful secret. Here, nothing ignites. Spiritual rigor mortis has set in. These women don't try to fight or flee. The mere mention of apologetics paralyzes them.

To you women who don't know what apologetics is or fear it, I say this: Not knowing what it is does not mean you should be ashamed of your not knowing. Nor is it something you should be afraid to tell other Christians about. Many Christians, both men and women, don't really know what it is. When I first encountered it, I had no idea. So if you are reading this, and don't know what apologetics is, don't feel bad. Know that you are not alone. What's important is what you're doing about it right now. You're reading this book. I'm excited for you. You are about to go on an adventure you will never want to end. Apologetics changed my faith and my life. I'm convinced it will do the same for you.

But maybe none of this describes you. Maybe you do know what apologetics is. Maybe you picked up this book because of its promise to transform your faith from ordinary to extraordinary. Maybe you've wanted to give your faith that special something that's been missing for a long time, and while moseying through a stack of Christian books at a bookstore or a women's conference, you came across this book and thought it might help. Transforming

your faith is what you are interested in. You honestly didn't realize this book had anything to do with apologetics until just now! And you feel duped. And now that you know what it's about, you have no intention of reading any further because what you know about apologetics leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

Perhaps you feel this way because you see apologetics as a divider instead of a unifier and therefore want nothing to do with it. Perhaps you've seen it used to create a rift among Christian communities, families, and friends. Perhaps you've seen it used to intellectually tear individuals to shreds. Perhaps you've seen it used to shame, ridicule, and belittle unbelievers. If this describes you, please hear me out.

First, apologetics isn't inherently evil. That people have misused it in the past doesn't mean it's intrinsically bad. It's good. And shortly you will see that it is biblical as well. Second, please suspend judgment until after you've finished reading this entire book. You might see apologetics in a different light. And you might see that apologetics is the special ingredient that's been missing from your faith all along, the ingredient that has the power to transform your faith from ordinary to extraordinary. If you still don't see apologetics in a different light after reading this book, I'll respect your position. All I ask is that you wait until after you've read the entire book before making a final decision. Fair enough? So what is this beast we call *apologetics*?

## Identifying the Beast

Simply put, *apologetics* is the rational defense for the truth claims of Christianity. Unlike other world religions, Christianity is true. Because it's true, its basic beliefs, such as God's existence, the reliability of the Bible, and Jesus' resurrection, for instance, can be defended much like a defendant can be defended in a court of law, with evidence and rational argumentation (a line of reasoning given to demonstrate the truth or falsehood of something).

Whenever I tell people I'm an apologist, I tell them I'm like one of God's lawyers here on earth. Like attorneys, Christian apologists

use rational argumentation to defend the claims God makes in the Bible about himself and the world to those who don't believe they are true. Apologists help them to see that they are true.

The Bible teaches that God revealed himself to human beings in two ways: (1) through His created order, or the world, which theologians call *General Revelation* (Rom. 1:20), and (2) through God's Word, or the Bible, which theologians call *Special Revelation* (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21). Through both, God tells human beings who He is, what He is like, and what His plan for the world is. While there is much we can learn about who God is and what He is like from General Revelation, there is much more we can learn through Special Revelation. For instance, through Special Revelation and only through Special Revelation, God tells us the following very specific facts about reality:

- That He exists and is the one and only God there is (Isa. 45:5–6)
- That there are two dimensions to this world: an invisible realm, which contains spiritual beings, such as God, angels, and demons, and a visible realm, which contains everything comprised of physical matter, such as the world and man (although there is a spiritual component to man as well, the soul) (Eph. 6:12; Luke 1:26)
- That it was He who created the world in which we live, and not the random forces and chance acts of evolution and natural selection (Gen. 1–2)
- That He created the world by speaking it into existence (Gen. 1:3–11)
- That He created man by forming him from the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7)
- That He and humans once enjoyed fellowship with each other in the garden of Eden until those humans disobeyed Him, fell into sin, and were cast out of the garden, losing that relationship with Him (Gen. 2:7–24; Gen. 3:1–24)

- How humans specifically fell into sin and that their sin affected not only the first generation, but all generations afterward (Gen. 2:15–24; 3:1–19; Rom. 5:12–21)
- The impact of a severed relationship with God for all of eternity, and our own spiritual and physical death as a consequence of our sin (Eph. 2:1–2; Rom. 5:12)
- God's plan of salvation to regenerate our dead spirits and restore our severed relationship with Him, through the atoning work Jesus did on the cross, for all who place their trust and faith in Him (Rom. 5:1–21; 10:9)
- That we are to live our lives under the lordship of Jesus and glorify God in all we think, say, and do (Gal. 5:19–20; 1 Cor. 6:19; 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:5)
- The reality of heaven for those who submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and the reality of hell for those who don't, as every human being's final and eternal destiny, a destiny that must be decided while still on earth (Luke 16:19–31)
- That this earth will pass away and a new heaven and earth will be established by God where believers in Christ will fellowship and reign with Him for all eternity (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1; 2 Tim. 2:12)

Like it or not, this is the reality in which we all, not just some, live. You might say this is the “real world.” The world in which we live is not some fantasy world created by Walt Disney. This is not “a kingdom far, far away” and we are not Sleeping Beauty or Snow White. Unlike God, we do not have the power to speak our own reality into existence like Brendan Fraser did in the movie *Inkheart*. Sure, it's fun to pretend we could, which is why movies like *Inkheart* are fun to watch. But that's all it is. Pretend! The reality in which we live is not generated by the ideas of imaginative people who create a reality we wish were true. Rather, reality is generated by God; it is true, and thus must be accepted by all who walk the earth.

This is where apologetics comes in. Because Christianity is true, there is a lot of historical, archeological, scientific, and

philosophical evidence to support its beliefs. Apologetics is the art of taking all that evidence and organizing it in a coherent line of reasoning to demonstrate to ourselves and to others why it is more rational or reasonable to believe that Christianity's central beliefs are true than to disbelieve them.

Notice I did not use the word *prove*. I said the goal of apologetics is to take the evidence and organize it in a coherent way to demonstrate it is more *rational* or *reasonable* to believe Christianity's main beliefs are true than to disbelieve. Just as in a court of law, 100 percent certainty is not the goal. Rather, belief beyond a reasonable doubt is the goal.

Most things in life cannot be proven with 100 percent certainty. For instance, we cannot prove with 100 percent certainty that we will not die in a plane crash when we get on a plane. This is where faith comes in. Because we cannot prove it with 100 percent certainty, we need to take a leap of faith and trust that the pilots are well trained to handle the plane under any conditions. We must believe the statistical odds are with us that we probably won't crash.

The same is true with Christianity's central tenets. We cannot prove with 100 percent certainty that Christianity is true. What we can do is prove with as much certainty as possible, given the evidence God provides, that it is more rational to believe it is true than to believe it is not true. The rest must be taken by faith. This is where our hearts come in. Our minds can only take us so far. Strong faith is a dynamic interplay between our heads *and* our hearts. This is why Jesus told the Pharisees to include their minds in their faith in addition to their hearts (Matt. 22:37). This is why Peter also charged the church to do so, as you will see shortly.

## The Beast Is Biblical

Apologetics is not something the modern church created. Rather it is something God created. When the apostle Peter wrote to the church, he told them to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks" them to give a reason for the hope that they

have and to do it “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). What did Peter mean exactly? Let’s unpack it to see.

Peter used the ancient Greek word *apologia*, which translated into English is *answer*. It means “to give an apology or defense, as in a court of law,” and is where the word *apologetics* comes from. When lawyers defend someone in a court of law, they collect evidence to prove their client is innocent. They make strong defenses to represent their clients by preparing arguments (in a philosophic sense, not in an argumentative sense) that list reasons why their clients are not guilty. In addition, they prepare answers to tough questions they believe the prosecuting attorney will pose to their clients and witnesses to help them adequately prepare to testify on the stand. Lawyers prepare all parties involved beforehand *well*, so they are not caught off guard when it matters, when the prosecuting attorney pummels them in court.

What Peter is telling us, then, is that we need to know exactly what we believe about our faith *and* why we believe it, so when we are asked about our faith, we can articulate both responses. Peter is telling us to prepare beforehand *well*, so we will not be caught off guard when it matters, when people ask us about our faith. It looks like this: “I believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God for the following six reasons:”

1. There are approximately 25,000 manuscript fragments of the New Testament in existence today that reveal the Bible we now have matches 99.5 percent of the material the writers wrote in the original documents.
2. There are ancient writers outside the faith whose writings confirm the historical facts written in the Bible, such as Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Lucian.
3. There are thousands of archeological discoveries that confirm the Bible’s historical content.
4. Jesus’ birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection reveal that He fulfilled 332 Old Testament prophecies that pinpoint Him as the Jewish Messiah.

5. Fulfilling these prophecies is statistically impossible for any single human being to do.
6. The fulfillment of the biblical prophecies substantiates the Bible’s supernatural origin.

Peter is also telling us that we should be able to answer tough questions about our faith. How well should we be able to answer thorny questions, especially those that are particularly prickly? We should apply the same standard. We should be able to answer them reasonably well. Notice the standard isn’t perfection here. Jesus was the only One who could achieve perfection on earth. We are human. We are imperfect. Our goal is to do the best we can with the understanding we have at the time we are asked.

Don’t worry if some of your answers don’t come out as well as you would like. God can and will use anything, including our befuddled responses. And many times that’s exactly what He does, so we know that He is the one who is doing the mighty work in people’s hearts and not us. This doesn’t take us off the hook, though. We are still called to do the best we can. It’s important to understand, however, that apologetics can only do so much. Becoming good at answering tough questions well is achieved by taking risks, stepping out in faith, attempting to answer questions, messing up, and learning from our mistakes. Being good at our responses takes practice—lots and lots of practice.

Another thing Peter tells us to do is “always be prepared” (1 Peter 3:15). The word Peter used for *prepared* in the original Greek text implies the idea of being fit, as one would strive to become physically fit. For those of us who understand what getting, and staying, physically fit entails, we know it requires working out hard and consistently. Getting in shape and then quitting our workout regimen is not an option. Why? Because the moment we stop working out, our muscles begin to atrophy. Before we know it, we are out of shape and have to begin all over again.

There is no such thing as *maintaining* physical health. The moment we stop moving forward, we start sliding backward. Growth only occurs with change. And change requires motion. When we

apply this to apologetics in our spiritual lives, it means we need to *continually* prepare ourselves to defend our faith without stopping, so we are *always* ready to give a response should somebody ask. And don't miss Peter's implication that someone will ask. But you already know that. Someone already has—many times. Right? The question we need to honestly answer is “How well did we do with our responses?”

If we stop the demanding, ongoing work necessary for giving a good defense for our faith, our defenses deteriorate just as our bodies do if we stop working out. This means that preparing to defend our faith is not a one-time thing. It is not enough to take one apologetics class, or attend one apologetics lecture, or read one book on apologetics, including this one. Immersing ourselves in apologetics is something we must constantly strive to do each and every day of our Christian lives.

For this reason, I believe apologetics is a spiritual discipline that should be incorporated into our quiet times alongside reading and studying our Bible, meditation, and prayer. Do you think that's a radical statement? I don't. Why? Because incorporating apologetics into our lives as Christian women is not a helpful suggestion; it is a biblical command (1 Peter 3:15).

Peter also tells us to defend our faith with “gentleness and respect.” This is the most overlooked part of the verse; it is also the most important part. Sharing and defending our faith is an incredible privilege given to every Christian, not to be taken lightly. We should not think of it as something we *have* to do to fill some daily or monthly quota, so we can feel good about ourselves because we are fulfilling the Great Commission Jesus gave us in Matthew 28:19–20. Or so we sound good to others when they ask us how many people we've shared and defended our faith with recently. Instead, we should think of it as an amazing opportunity we've been given. Sharing and defending our faith flows from a heart full of love and gratitude, not obligation and duty.

It's important to remember that sharing and defending our faith is not about us. It's about the people whom God places in our lives. When we have the opportunity to do it, it is not about

how good we sound. Instead, it is about helping people see that Christianity is true and that they have a need for Christ. It's about them, not us. We must never forget this.

It is also important to understand that when we use strong philosophical arguments, the goal is not to intellectually slam someone against a wall to knock them out so we can declare ourselves the winner. Rather it is to help them see where their thinking is illogical or where their current worldview is incoherent.

There is another important factor to understand. People become defensive when their beliefs are challenged, as they will be when we share and defend our faith. How defensive they become, however, depends upon the person. Some people become very defensive, while others only become somewhat defensive. How can we predict who will become defensive, and to what degree, and who will not? We can't. However, here's what I've found to be true. The level to which someone becomes defensive is directly proportionate to the level to which they feel something important to them is being threatened.

Whenever I share my faith with Mormons, for example, I know most will become very defensive. Why? Because I know when I'm asking them to consider the truth claims of Christianity in light of Mormonism, I am not asking them to simply switch from one belief system to another, with no repercussions. I am asking them to leave behind the familiarity and security they have known their entire lives. I am asking them to do something that might alienate them from their Mormon families and communities. I am asking them to do something frightening. And fear in most people, more often than not, manifests as anger (a response I anticipate and get).

When we speak with people outside the Christian faith, it is vital to remember that we are speaking to real people with real feelings who may be incredibly threatened by what we say. Therefore, we should be careful not to become impatient or irritated with them because they are not as easily swayed by our impressive arguments as we think they should be. Also, we must remind ourselves that the reason they are being defensive to the degree they are is because what we say is threatening their security. This is why Peter tells

us to give our answers to others with “gentleness and respect.” I cannot stress this enough. Sharing and defending our faith must come from a heart of compassion, empathy, and respect.

Finally, we must not overlook to whom Peter gave this charge. Peter gave it to the persecuted church in Jerusalem scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). He gave it to people who could—many of whom did—lose their lives for fulfilling this charge. Countless numbers were ripped to shreds by hungry lions. Many were burned at the stake. Others were crucified. Some were stoned to death. Several were beheaded. Peter knew Christians could die for what he was telling them to do. He told them to do it anyway.

## Embracing the Beast

For those of you who didn't know what apologetics was before reading this chapter, do you still fear the beast? Now that you know what it is, are you ready to incorporate apologetics into your spiritual life as a daily spiritual discipline, as I've suggested? If your answer is *no* or *not yet* and the reason is because there is already too much on your schedule, imagine telling the first-century Christians to whom Peter initially gave this charge exactly what you think it will cost you. Your time? Your money? Your energy? Lunch with friends? An extra weekly Bible study? Less time in the gym? An evening out with your husband or significant other? A night at the movies? Your favorite TV show? A night out at the theater? I'll bet whatever you say would fall on deaf ears.

## Discussion Questions

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1. Before reading this chapter, did you know what apologetics was? If not, what did you think it meant?
2. Is apologetics something you fear? If so, why? What obstacles do you need to overcome to get past your fears?

3. Do you believe your faith reflects a healthy balance of engaging both your head and heart, or is your faith lopsided? If so, in what way is it lopsided? What do you think it needs to give it proper balance?
4. Incorporating apologetics into our lives on a daily basis as a spiritual discipline is essential for sharing and defending our faith. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. How specifically can you begin incorporating apologetics into your life on a daily basis as a daily spiritual discipline?
6. Do you believe that learning how to engage your mind in your faith as well as your heart can transform your faith from ordinary to extraordinary? How do you think it might strengthen your faith? How do you think it might help you share your faith?