



Discussion Questions

CULTURAL APOLOGETICS

by Paul M. Gould

Chapter 6: Conscience

1. In the chapter's introduction, the church's "public relations problem" is discussed. A common complaint is that "Christians today are known primarily by what they stand against instead of what they stand for" (p146).
 - a. Has this been your observation among Christians you know, or true of yourself?

 - b. What do you think has led to this frame of mind?

2. Another problem studies have revealed is that there is little difference in the lifestyle of believers and nonbelievers: "The lives of some Christians make a great argument for atheism" (p.147).
 - a. What evidence of this have you observed?

 - b. What are some ways church leaders might be contributing to this situation?

3. Gould uses C.S. Lewis's fleet of ships metaphor of the moral life as a parallel to the three expressions of the universal longing for goodness: the longing for wholeness (individual human flourishing); the longing for justice (right relationship to others); and the longing for significance (life purpose for God's kingdom).
 - a. What are some ways people pursue wholeness apart from wholeness in Christ, that lead to "temporary amnesia" (p.150), but fail to bring about true and lasting wholeness/flourishing?

- b. Gould makes the connection between the problem of evil and human longing for justice. He tells the story of a Buddhist who became a Christian as a result of working alongside Christians to protect young girls from sex trafficking. What are your thoughts about joining forces with nonbelievers or people of other faiths to promote justice? What are the pros/cons? Should there be limitations?
- c. Gould retells his personal journey from working as a CPA to doing what he believes God has called him to do.
- i. How might the quest for a life of significance lead to sinful attitudes or behaviors?
 - ii. What are ways we can safeguard against sinful attitudes/behaviors in our efforts to lead meaningful lives?
4. The section “Looking at Morality” presents the argument from morality for God’s existence based on C.S. Lewis’s formulation (5 premises and a conclusion listed on pp.156-57). Which of the explanations defending the argument did you find most helpful or compelling? Were there any areas that were unclear or that you found unconvincing?
5. The last section of the chapter compares two philosophies for cultural change:
- Bottom-up: changing individual lives and local communities will eventually change the world (Dreher)
 - Top-down: the culture-shaping institutions and their leaders are the real influencers (Hunter)
- Gould acknowledges good points in Dreher’s view, but argues that Hunter’s view is more correct and effective. Which view do you agree with more? Why?