

3 THREE REASONS

a Seminary
Education May
Be Right
for You



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THREE REASONS

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INTRODUCTION

**ARE YOU
READY TO
ENGAGE?**

Written on the wall of the administration building on the Southern Evangelical Seminary (SES) campus is what SES co-founder Dr. Norman Geisler once said: “Apologetics is simply to defend the faith and thereby destroy arguments and every proud obstacle against the knowledge of God. It is opening the door, clearing the rubble, and getting rid of the hurdles so that people can come to Christ.” In short, we believe apologetics is simply loving people enough to answer their honest questions.

Whether you feel God leading you to pursue some form of professional ministry, or whether you simply want to be more equipped to talk to your coworkers or train your family, there is good reason for you to consider going to seminary. Today’s Christians must be equipped with a deeper, more meaningful education in the subjects of biblical studies, theology, philosophy, and Christian apologetics in order to meet the immediate challenges faced in sharing the Gospel in our society.

We all understand that every culture is built upon ideas, whether good or bad, that influence every aspect of life. Our modern cultural context is the consequence of numerous bad ideas playing themselves out which have resulted in a society that views Christianity very differently from years past. For example, two out of five Americans are now considered “post-Christian,” and 23 percent of American adults are considered “nones” (atheist, agnostic, or religiously unaffiliated). Sadly, 50 percent of “nones” cite a “lack of belief” for why they left religion.¹ Moreover, as much as 75 percent of youth are leaving the church after high school, and half of American skeptics now have a college degree.² Consider this: the Christian birthrate is around 2.1 compared to just 1.6 for “nones.”³ Yet, “nones” are on the rise and Christianity’s influence is declining. We are essentially breeding the next generation of skeptics!

What Do ‘Nones’ Think?

There are many reasons why people reject Christianity, some of which are emotional and willful. Nevertheless, when “nones” were asked why they reject Christianity, their answers reveal the fact that they simply don’t think Christianity is true! Instead, many often think one or more of the following:

- 1. Science and faith are incompatible because faith is irrational.**
- 2. There are no good reasons to believe in God.**
- 3. Christianity is bigoted, intolerant, and needlessly exclusive.**

In other words, there are often large pieces of “rubble” and many “hurdles” preventing our modern audience from considering thoughtfully the claims of Jesus. While ministry within proper personal relationships is always important, as Barna Research Group has observed,

“...our research suggests that most of the efforts of Christian ministries fail to reach much beyond the core of ‘Christianized’ America. It’s much easier to work with this already-sympathetic audience than to focus on the so-called ‘nones’. ... Christians for whom ‘ministry is about relationships’ may be disappointed when they find that many skeptics are not as enamored of relational bonds as are those who are already a part of church life. ... New levels of courage and clarity will be required to connect beyond the Christianized majority.”⁴

Rather than run from bad ideas, believers are called to be salt and light wherever they may find themselves (Matthew 5:13; Acts 17; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3).



Most church goers, however, are often ill-equipped for this task and just as confused as the “nones.” As more and more traditional Christian thinking is being forgotten, the ideas of the culture are being adopted by many modern believers. For instance, 68 percent of American church goers believe that God accepts the worship of all religions, 41 percent think gender is a matter of choice, and 49 percent agree that religious belief is a matter of personal opinion rather than objective truth.⁵

Why do you believe the Gospel is actually true? Why should anyone in a highly-educated, scientific, and technologically-advanced culture accept Christianity? Good theology and apologetics directly address all the issues listed above.

Do you currently have easy access to in-depth study taught by a well-trained teacher on such relevant issues as atheism and skepticism? What about reasons and arguments for the existence of God? What about miracles? How about the problem of evil, the reliability of the Bible, or the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus? What about recent heretical religious movements such as Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses, or how to reach and evangelize those from other religions? How about ethical concerns such as same-sex marriage, gender identity, and the right to life? The topics and issues needing to be addressed today could go on and on.

If your answer is “Yes,” then wonderful! But more than likely, as for many today, your answer is “No, I’m currently receiving little to no training in those areas.” And yet those are the very issues challenging the Christian faith in our country and world. As SES professor Dr. Richard Howe says, “Good theology is essential to good discipleship.”

This short e-book is intended to help you consider three reasons why a seminary education may be right for you. More specifically, it is intended to communicate the importance of a special kind of seminary education. At SES, apologetics is not just a class or two. Rather, every class at SES investigates the philosophical and apologetics issues related to its specific subjects. Regardless of your particular vocation or ministry context, sound theology that is undergirded with good philosophy and apologetics is a must for doing the heavy lifting of removing obstacles so that people can come to Christ. This deep integration of theology, philosophy, and apologetics enables believers to lovingly and persuasively engage an increasingly hostile culture with the Gospel while simultaneously enriching one's own grasp of the "faith once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3).





REASON ONE

**READING
BOOKS &
LISTENING
TO TALKS
IS NOT
ENOUGH**

You may or may not intend to be a professional Christian apologist, minister, or teacher. You may be just like hundreds of other seminary students who just want to learn more and be better equipped so Christ might use them more effectively in ministry. So why should you consider a degree or certificate from SES?

Before they go to seminary many people read books on apologetics and listen to or watch many talks, lectures, debates, etc. You may realize the Lord is using you, but more than likely you also think that you are missing something. Students studying to be schoolteachers, scientists, lawyers, doctors, or any number of professions do not learn their skills by just reading books and listening to inspiring talks. Please understand, there is an important role for books, podcasts, conferences, etc. After all, SES hosts many events including the [National Conference on Christian Apologetics](#), publishes a [blog](#) and [podcast](#), and even has a [smartphone app](#) with many resources. Nevertheless, when Dr. Geisler was once asked, “Why is that not in the textbook?” (a textbook Dr. Geisler actually authored), he quickly responded,

“Not everything is in the textbook; that is why we have class!”

You may like theology, philosophy, or apologetics, use the disciplines in ministry, and see the increasing cultural and worldwide need for them, but for whatever reason you have not considered taking the next step that reveals the value and importance of professionally studying these subjects to maximize your effectiveness in ministry. Just know that “not everything is in the textbook!”

Some learning will only be achieved in a controlled education setting with standards

by which you are held accountable and by which your achievement is measured. Textbooks and talks alone will not give you that. While in seminary, you should experience constant correction and being put in uncomfortable, but safe, positions so you can learn from failure as well as success in a way that the knowledge and practice of the subject becomes second nature.

Self-taught study in theology, philosophy, and apologetics, while usually better than no study at all, lacks focused training and an overarching structure that combines theory and practice in order to impact the breadth and depth of your ministry. It may produce knowledge, but self-study usually never rises to the proper level of insight, understanding, and wisdom in the practice of these disciplines.

At SES, we have never given up on our emphasis of apologetics and evangelism training. It is interwoven into all of our degrees and certificates. We do not merely offer courses in theology, philosophy, and apologetics. Rather, we weave these disciplines throughout each of our programs to form a cohesive and systematic understanding of reality as a whole. SES faculty and staff connect with you on your journey to advise, affirm, and mentor you along the way. Our focus is on discipleship and leadership training to multiply the effectiveness of your personal and professional ministry. Consider just a few thoughts from the SES family:

“If I knew a fraction of what I know now, it could have saved me from 10 years of atheism, and what I know now is only a fraction of what SES has to offer. I was looking for answers that no one could give me, and then I found SES.” – **SEAN MURPHY**, *SES Student*

“Apologetics wasn’t a side issue. It was the ... essence of the ministry I was doing. ... I’m finding out more and more how important it is to be trained in order to pick up on these philosophical problems to answer the real question that’s at hand.” – **ANTHONY MILLER**, *SES Student*

“I had high hopes when I applied [to SES], but they have been far exceeded. Thank you so much for putting together a program that is both intellectually challenging and applicable in the contemporary landscape. Joining SES has been the highlight of my academic career!” – **KRISTEN DAVIS**, *SES Student*

“I can’t recommend SES any more highly. ... There’s no better place to come to get to know God and make Him known.” – **DR. FRANK TUREK**, *SES Alum & Adjunct Professor, President of CrossExamined.org*





REASON TWO

**NOT ALL
APOLOGETICS
METHODS
ARE CREATED
EQUALLY**

If you have read any books on, or just watched others do, apologetics you have probably discovered that not everyone is teaching or doing apologetics the same way. You may not yet know why or be able to discern all the different ways. You may not even think it is important. Typically, only after studying the history and controversies related to the subject under professors that know the right way from the wrong ways will you be able to see the importance of what is known as classical apologetics. You will understand how apologetics supports and integrates into classical theism and all other subjects to create a systematic and defensible approach to Christianity. In addition, you will be motivated to learn it more effectively, efficiently, and comprehensively and be aware of the dangers inherent in certain other methods of defending the Gospel.

Here are five principles we believe apologetics must have to incorporate the right method and content:

1. Apologetics must be distinguished from evangelism. Apologetics answers questions about Christianity (1 Peter 3:15), and it can build a positive case for the Christian faith (Luke 1:4). But this is clearly different from evangelism or proclaiming the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Evangelism is done any time, any place, to anyone, in any conversation. Apologetics is only done when and if needed for unbelievers or even believers and is used to defend the faith or strengthen the faith.

2. Apologetics must define truth and demolish any relative notion of truth. To counter today's postmodern world, you need to defend truth as absolute. Our culture often says that beliefs about religion or God are subjective: true for you but

not necessarily for them. But if truth corresponds to reality, the way things are, then truth is grounded in the objective world everyone knows. The law of non-contradiction shows us that something cannot be true or false at the same time and in the same sense/relationship. So if “C” (Christianity) is true, then all “non-C,” anything opposed to “C,” is false. The truth is, there is no such thing as a relative truth. Relativism is self-defeating, as it assumes relativism is true for everyone (i.e., absolute), which is nonsensical.

3. Apologetics must demonstrate the existence of God. If our second point is correct, then we can reason from a changing reality to an unchanging cause of all things. The traditional arguments for the existence and nature of God are not dead if truth is absolute and knowable. This is simply because regardless of one’s worldview, everyone has access to knowing the same reality with the same kind of human intellect. Moreover, we must connect such arguments with the theistic nature of the God of the Bible (Exodus 3:14) and show that there can be only one such Being (God) who is necessary, eternal, all-knowing, and all-powerful.

4. Apologetics must show that worldviews opposed to Theism are false. Given points two and three above, it is possible to show that no opposing view of God is true or can be true. Atheism, the view that there is no God, and Pantheism, the view that God is identical to creation, are false if Theism (there is one transcendent God) is true. This, therefore, provides the context to understand everything else in the world, including science and history.

5. Apologetics must give a systematic defense of the Christian faith. An apologetic must connect the theistic view of God to the historical truth of the New

Testament by showing that Jesus claimed to be God, fulfilled prophecy by rising bodily from the dead, and taught that his apostles had the same God-breathed inspiration and miraculous power as the Old Testament prophets.

Only upon these premises can we rest the claim that Christianity is true and everything opposed to it is false. Yes, there are difficult passages in the Bible, but the plain things are the main things. Yes, truth exists outside the Bible, but nothing can be true that contradicts the Bible since Jesus, the Son of God, taught it is the Word of God (John 17:17).

With apologetic resources so widely known and accessible today, it becomes increasingly important that the right method and content be a part of your apologetics education. The internet has certainly made that possible to a degree. Yet, because not all apologetic methodology is created equally, it can be a blessing or a curse. Therefore, we encourage you to evaluate apologetics programs, ministries, and materials to make sure that they do not miss these five important things so that your faith, and the faith of those you disciple, will not be compromised.





REASON THREE

**A DEGREE
IS MORE
THAN A
PIECE
OF PAPER**



You may indeed be struggling with valid questions: “How will I pay for this?” or, “How will I find the time?” Certainly, only by God’s grace and providence will this happen, and we do not counsel anyone to go into debt or sacrifice their family for a seminary education. Even with the challenges of time and money, most who have studied theology, philosophy, and apologetics in seminary will agree that going to seminary was one of the most important things they ever did, and they would do it again if needed. Most things in life that are truly helpful, worthwhile, and lifelong take time, effort, and commitment to have any payoff. A theological education is no different. Hence, that diploma is a valuable historical record of your learning experience.

Here are five reasons to be thankful for a theological seminary education like you will find at SES:

1. Be thankful for good philosophy. Philosophy is the *fabric of theology*.

It is interwoven throughout and holds all truth together. Theology is possible because philosophy can demonstrate the existence and nature of God without relying on the Bible. Yet, it gives us the tools needed to explore the existence of God’s nature, which is in unmistakable agreement with the God of the Bible. Philosophy also

shows how we can meaningfully use language to speak about God, while recognizing that finite minds will never exhaust His majesty. The philosophical supporting of theology is just one unique and important aspect for which SES is known. True philosophy will always support the theological endeavor. Without this, one is more likely to support theology with wrong reasoning or see no reason at all for some theological assertions.

2. Be thankful for Biblical Studies. The Bible is the *bedrock*

of theology. Many who go off to secular colleges and universities have taken religion or Bible classes from a liberal professor. However, after hearing SES professors like Dr. Thomas Howe, you realize your education in the Bible has been a half-inch high (maybe less) and three miles long (or longer). It simply has no depth. Dr. Howe and our other professors provide amazing insights into the structure of the biblical books, explain how to deal with difficult passages, and demolish critical theories that undermine the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.

3. Be thankful for Historical Theology. History is the *legacy*

of theology. Ignore theology's history and you might be led into error, or worse. Many cults and false teachers today are just repackaging errors found in dusty books. We must know our history and tradition, respect it and learn from it, but also bring it to the bar of Scripture. Because of the Reformation, we can rest assured the five Solas (Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, and glory to God alone) will continue to be known if we have the Bible in the language of the people. You will treasure the Bible more and not complain of so many translations when you realize the price paid to put it in our tongue. Indeed, because men of God paid with their lives, the torch of God's grace has not gone out, and you are able to study your Bible.

4. Be thankful for Apologetics. Apologetics is the *defense*

of theology. Many today continue to hold to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible because of Christian apologetics. Apologetics must begin with reality or truth common to all, not just the Bible. It must dig deeply into philosophy, science, and history and pull out demonstrations for the truthfulness of Christianity.

One old but common objection to apologetics heard in church even today says, “The Bible, the Word of God, does not need to be defended. It is like a lion; all you need to do is let it loose.” Dr. Geisler insightfully answers this by saying, “The Word of God does not need a defense, but that statement ‘the Bible is the word of God’ needs a defense.” Otherwise, we would have no answer to other religions who claim their book to be the “word of God.” Indeed, we fear a lion only because we already know what a lion can do.

5. Be thankful for Systematic Theology. Systematic theology is the

fullest expression of theology. The problem with some people’s theology before seminary was that it did not have enough “systematic” in it. Granted, it may lack some “theology” too. But it is the systematic that makes everything stick together or make sense. Only systematic theology integrates truth outside the Bible with truth inside the Bible to give a coherent and full expression of all God’s revelation found in the created world and in the inspired Word. When we finally see how one doctrine affects another, then we understand that there is nothing more important for developing a true understanding of Christianity and the world.

For example, SES emphasizes the important philosophical and theological truth that God exists as pure actuality (Pure Act) with no potentiality to change because upon this

truth hangs all the attributes of God. To not make sure all theological reasoning adheres to this truth is to steer in the direction that makes God a mere angel or Superman. Likewise, we teach the importance of consistently applying the historical-grammatical method of interpretation to arrive at a correct understanding of every biblical doctrine. To not do so is to swerve theology in the direction of spiritualizing the scriptural text. SES consistently teaches that these five vital principles and God's unshakable truth that constitutes these subjects are relevant to the study of theology.

It is a heavy order to think you will be involved in providing theological education to the next generation. Such a responsibility must be taken seriously as teachers will incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1). We hope you take your theological education seriously and be thankful it is not deficient or missing from your ministry. As one recent SES grad said,

“The integrated approach of synthesizing a sound philosophy with classical apologetics and a cohesive, biblical theology is probably the thing I love most about SES. The value of such a systematized and integrated approach for one's apologetics, ministry, and personal growth is difficult to explain until you have experienced it for yourself.”





CONCLUSION

**WHAT
ARE YOU
WAITING
FOR?**

Southern Evangelical Seminary is not just for pastors. It is for high schoolers, homeschool parents, Sunday school teachers, lay ministers, lay missionaries, and of course, the professional Christian schoolteacher, minister, missionary, and pastor. SES is for anyone wanting to be more equipped to effectively engage today's culture with the truth of the Gospel.

We draw students from across the U.S and around the world who live busy lives. We accommodate your busy schedule by offering flexible (mostly evening) classes either on campus, live-streamed, or in a more traditional online format. Each of our for-credit certificates (Christian Apologetics, Scientific Apologetics, Islamic Studies, Philosophy, PPE, Biblical Languages, Global Engagement) and degree programs (B.A., M.A., M.Div & Th.M.), with the exception of a few one-week seminars in the doctoral programs (D.Min. & Ph.D.), can be completed totally online or via live-stream. Classes are offered in one-week module formats, eight-week terms, and fifteen-week semesters. Our classes are competitively priced and well below the national average with some needs-based scholarships also available. As SES President Dr. Richard Land says,

“Over the years, it has become increasingly clear to me that the way we will spell evangelism, discipleship, missions, and Christian education in the 21st century is *apologetics*. ... Among evangelical institutions, SES uniquely infuses classical apologetics and philosophy throughout each of our programs to serve this end. Hundreds of SES graduates are proclaiming and defending the Christian faith from the pulpit, the mission field, on campus, and in the business world. Will you be next among them?”

In short, Christians are called to engage our confused culture. Your personal and professional ministry can have a greater impact with a formal study of, and integrated training in, theology, philosophy, and apologetics. SES can give you that training as well as the ability to apply it to the challenges we face in our culture today.

► What Are You Waiting For?

To learn more about applying to SES, please contact one of our Admissions Counselors at admissions@ses.edu or call **(704) 847-5600 x216**.



Recommended Reading

As you prepare to equip yourself to better proclaim and defend the Gospel, we recommend the following books (with many more available upon request):

1. Norman L. Geisler, *If God, Why Evil? A New Way to Think About the Question* (Bethany House, 2011).
2. Norman L. Geisler, *Twelve Points That Show Christianity is True* (Norm Geisler International Ministries, 2013).
3. Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (BakerBooks, 2013).
4. Norman Geisler and David Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism: How to Listen and Speak so you can be Heard* (Harvest House, 2009).
5. Norman L. Geisler and Douglas E. Potter, *A Popular Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Norm Geisler International Ministries, 2016).
6. Norman L. Geisler and Ryan P. Snuffer, *Love Your Neighbor: Thinking Wisely about Right and Wrong* (Crossway, 2007).
7. Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Crossway, 2004)

Endnotes

1. <https://www.barna.com/research/2015-state-of-atheism-in-america/>, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/14/the-factors-driving-the-growth-of-religious-nones-in-the-u-s/>, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>
2. <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/are-young-people-really-leaving-christianity/>
3. <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/>
4. <https://www.barna.com/research/2015-state-of-atheism-in-america/>
5. <https://thestateoftheology.com/>



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