

Proving Christianity is True with Norman Geisler's Twelve-Point Argument

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Forty years ago, we were all left wondering if the most effective martial art style for one-versus-one hand-to-hand combat was some style of karate or kung-fu. The film industry left us uncertain. But now, after seeing how the sport of Mixed Martial Arts evolved, it seems that it really does not matter which kind of traditional fighting style a fighter starts with and specializes in so long as he adapts his style to real-world, no-holds-barred contests. He needs to add to his toolbox additional techniques that make him formidable in all four ranges of unarmed combat—kicking, boxing, trapping, and grappling. The stand-up fighter needs to learn ground fighting. The ground fighter needs to learn to fight on his feet. If he becomes truly formidable in all four ranges and truly great in at least one of those ranges, no one is surprised when he becomes a contender for top rank. To get there, he needs to refine his strategies and techniques during pressure testing, mimicking real fights as closely as possible and limited by as few strictures as possible. The same is largely true for those of us who would defend the Christian faith in one-on-one, no-holds-barred, real-world evangelistic conversations.

To effectively remove the intellectual obstacles that keep nonbelievers away from the LORD Jesus Christ, we need to learn and become formidable with an apologetic that has already been pressure-tested in conversation with seekers and skeptics. We need something that works not just high up in the ivory tower but also in the street—in the workplace, amongst neighbors, on college campuses, and in the academy. We need to be ready to give an answer not just for the hope that is within us, but also for the frequently asked questions that invariably surface in conversations leading to Christ. The apologist should have the tools in his or her toolbox to fix the full range of common obstacles. Norman Geisler offers such a toolbox.

Norm is known mostly as a classical Christian apologist. Some of us think of him as the grandfather of classical apologetics in North America. You could say he was a bit of a cross between Billy Graham and Thomas Aquinas. As a young man, street evangelism led him to apologetics. And his study of Christian theology led him to pre-modern philosophy. He went on to earn multiple degrees in both theology and philosophy. He debated secular humanists in public

debates at secular universities for thirty-five years. He directly trained and otherwise influenced countless other classical apologists—some of whom are better known today than Norm ever was. Along with Winfried Corduan, he co-founded the International Society of Christian Apologetics. He taught theology and apologetics at the graduate level for over fifty years. During those decades, he developed an apologetic system now known simply as *Twelve Points that Show Christianity is True*.

Power to Destroy Bad Arguments with Good Ones

When the Apostle Paul spoke to a pagan Greek audience in Athens, he reasoned with their minds before concluding with a gospel presentation. The results were mixed: some scoffed, some believed, and some sought to hear more (Acts 17:32, 34). We should not settle for an apologetic that delivers lesser results. Geisler's system delivers. When he lectured or debated at secular universities, some doubted, some believed, and some wanted to hear more. Many came to faith by reading his apologetic books. After <https://normangeisler.com/contact> first began to allow mail to be sent to him in 2011, he received a note of appreciation saying “your book changed my life” every other week on average for an entire year. When Charlie Kirk, whose powerful and dangerous voice was silenced exactly a year ago, needed a streetwise apologetic to use on college campuses, he got his coaching from Frank Turek, one of Geisler's many proteges.

Overview of the 12 Points

Norm insisted that there are four great intellectual battle fronts the defender must fight: (1) The battle for Truth. (2) The battle for God. (3) The battle for the Bible. (4) The battle for Jesus. Those are the four ranges that Geisler covers with his twelve-point, long-chain, logical argument. Keep the overarching argument in mind as we will take a quick tour of the twelve points.

1 | Truth about Reality is Knowable

You exist. Feel free to try to doubt that as hard as you can. You just end up realizing that you must exist in order to doubt. The stuff around you is real. The world exists outside of and independent of our minds. It is not an illusion. There is no good reason to doubt this.

Truth is simply telling it like it is. Our statements and ideas can either be true or not true. That is, they either do or do not correspond to reality. Although some deny this correspondence view of truth, they must use this very view in the attempt to deny it.

Not everyone believes that reality is knowable or that truth about reality can be known. Relativists, Agnostics, Skeptics, and Postmodernists all have views which destroy themselves when applied to their views.

From the first principle of existence (B is) we can go on to other things that we should all know—other first principles of knowledge/reality/truth and the laws of logic. There is the law of identity (B is B), of non-contradiction (B is not non-B), of excluded middle (either B or non-B), of causality (something is caused by something, not nothing), and of finality. These truths can be known and should be known. It is not circular reasoning to assert them as indubitable. They simply cannot be avoided. To attempt to ignore or break them is futile and leads to total absurdity in thought and language. Those who attempt to break the laws of logic or the first principles of thought are invariably broken by them.

It is not just the worldings who do not believe in absolute truth; it is a high percentage of the churchians too. Why are so many young people who are raised in church-going families deconstructing, apostatizing, and failing to persevere in the faith they inherited? One of the reasons is that they do not have a solid foundation of truth. Their house is built on the sand. Some rain falls and their once impressive looking faith crumbles and washes away.

2 | The Opposite of True is False

The law of noncontradiction is another first principle of thought that can and should be known and respected. Two opposing statements cannot be true at the same time in the same way. This truth is often ignored or violated by thinkers today and yet it is something that is impossible to avoid. Any attempt to contradict it requires the use of it. Any attempt to logically break it results in being logically broken by it. Truth is narrow by nature.

Pluralism is the competing view here. Multiculturalism fits in too. It suggests that there can be more than one true answer. A commonly used parable for this view is that of the six blind men and the elephant. The parable has been used in Buddhist, Jian, and Hindu texts for many centuries

and still enjoys some popularity today. It is used to argue that we are all very limited in our ability to make sense of the ultimate, transcendent reality. We each come up with a sincere, different, and partially valid interpretation of the divine. We are all partially right and therefore should respect all views. We are all limited in our ability to grasp the great beyond and should therefore be humble about our own views. Thus, peaceful and respectful coexistence can be fostered. As pleasant as this sounds, Geisler points out the failures of the parable. It is a poor parable because all six of the blind interpreters were not partially right; they were all totally wrong. Moreover, with the God of Jacob, we are not confined to the vagueness and subjectivity of making sense of *general* revelation, natural theology, and mysticism that cannot express what it touched if it could cross the chasm. While we mortals cannot transcend or ascend to God, God has communicated truths about himself to us in various forms of *special* revelation (Heb. 1:1-3; John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:5-9; Acts 17:29-31).

3 | The Theistic God Exists

From the first principles of thought, from the laws of logic, and from reasoning from effects to their causes, we can and should know that there is a God. But which God? There are several competing worldviews (or God-world models) that present very different Gods/ gods: Atheism, Agnosticism, Pantheism, Panentheism, Polytheism, Finite-Godism, Theism, and Deism. As a point of reference, when the Apostle Paul was speaking to epicurean and stoic philosophers in Athens (Acts 17), Paul was the theist, the Stoics were pantheists or panentheists, and the Epicureans were functional atheists who may have ranged between deism, finite godism, polytheism, and monism-pantheism. The theistic view maintains a wide gulf between Creator and creation and says that God is to the world like a painter is to his painting, a programmer is to his program, and a gardener is to his garden. In panentheism, lines begin to blur between Creator and creation.

After clarifying which concept of God reason leads towards, Norm typically used five arguments for God. His first argument is what he called the *horizontal* form of the cosmological argument. It argues from a beginning of the world in time to a Beginner. The second argument he called the *vertical* form of the cosmological argument. It argues from contingent being to Necessary Being. Whereas horizontal suggests a timeline, vertical indicates metaphysical or ontological dependency. The horizontal tends to appeal to science-minded people who respect the implications of the second law of thermodynamics, general relativity theory, and the expansion of

the universe from a beginning point. But it leads to a vague idea of God. The vertical may appeal to those who are more philosophically minded. It was considered by Norm to be the strongest and most important argument, and concludes not with a vague God but a God who seems to be described in the Bible (e.g., Exod. 3:13-16; Isaiah 44-51; Col. 1:1-2:15, Rom. 4:17; Acts 17:23-31; Rev. 1:8).¹

The third argument he presents is the teleological argument. It argues from designs to a Designer. The designs he focused on were the fine-tuning of the cosmos before it began to expand and the information encoded into all living cells. He talks about the anthropic principle, specified complexity, and irreducible complexity. Norm was keenly aware that both of these lines of evidence were instrumental in converting Anthony Flew, once known as the world's most notorious atheist, into a deist. While he did not consider this is strongest argument for God, he was nevertheless pleased to use it regularly.² The vertical argument was the main argument to prove that there is a theistic God and the argument from design was a supplemental argument to prove that God is not just an infinite, necessary, yet impersonal force (which the vertical argument arguably leaves us with) but an intelligent, personal, and purposeful being. For comparison, the Apostle Paul argued that God's design of the world's ecosystems was not simply just an intelligent design but one that shows his benevolence towards us. (Acts 14:17: "Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.")

¹ The vertical argument is showcased particularly in Geisler's books *Philosophy of Religion*, *Christian Apologetics*, and *God: A Philosophical Argument from Being*. It is also discussed in Christopher T. Haun, *The Geislerian Argument for God* (Arlington, TX: Bastion Books, 2026).

² In chapters 6-8 of *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edition, Geisler and Corduan survey five forms of the teleological argument, seven forms of the moral argument, seven forms of the ontological argument, and sixteen forms of the cosmological argument. While not rejecting the most refined forms of the teleological, moral, ontological, horizontal cosmological arguments, and contingency cosmological arguments, they surprise us by conceding that several of the criticisms are valid. Geisler seems somewhat neutral in disposition to these many traditional arguments, neither fully embracing them nor rejecting them. He rather champions one specific argument for God—the existential, Thomistic, vertical form of the cosmological argument. When they could only use one argument, Geisler and Corduan would use that one best argument. When Geisler had room to use other arguments as well, he would add good-but-imperfect arguments as supplemental facets. Whereas a few Thomistic philosophers have been harsh with the imperfections of arguments presented by ID pundits, Geisler is somewhat rare in that he was a Thomistic philosopher who was an early and constant supporter of the ID movement.

The fourth argument rallied was the moral argument. It argues from the fact of moral absolutes and moral laws to a Moral Law Legislator. This argument also indicates that the God that must exist is a personal, caring, purposeful, and moral. This also provides a segue into dealing with the problem of evil, which is arguably the biggest obstacle to belief in God.

The fifth and final argument was the argument from religious need—that if there is a real need (not imagined but real) for God in humans, there must be a real referent to satisfy that need. He followed C.S. Lewis closely on both. As a nice touch, he added a collection of several quotes from famous atheists who confessed that they could not bear to live with the atheism they had chosen. These arguments perhaps reached some people that the other arguments failed to reach.

In one sense, using these five arguments was like a locksmith using five different skeleton keys to lift the tumblers on a variety of locks. Most of the intellectual obstacles to belief in God would be severely challenged if not outright destroyed. While Norm was an extremely formidable defender on all twelve points in his system, throughout his long career his specialty was arguably points 1-3.³ It makes sense. If the seeker is not sold on and solid on truth and on God, none of the remaining nine points of the argument have much purchase.

4 | Miracles are Possible

Once we know that there is a God who acts, acts of God are clearly possible. If you have a God who can create our world, he can affect the world as well. All the miracles in the Bible are easy to believe if you can believe Genesis 1:1's statement that ". . . God created the heavens and the earth." The acts of creating everything out of nothing and of creating living things out of inanimate matter are both, when you think about it, more grandiose than resuscitating the dead back to life or healing someone born blind, for example.

Defining miracles is important. "Not everything that glitters is gold," says Dr. Geisler. Although miracles must be unusual events, not all unusual events are miracles. We exclude anomalies, providential occurrences that can operate within natural laws, amazing but regular events, and deceptive magic tricks. Satan and the other demons cannot do miracles. A miracle is

³ In his final public lecture, Norm chose to speak on points 1-3 and presented them as if they were really what the world most needed to hear and apologists most needed to offer. See Norman Geisler, "Defending the Faith in the Postmodern World," 2017. <https://normangeisler.com/defending-the-faith-in-the-postmodern-world>

an act of God and Satan is certainly not divine. Instead, Satan is a super-scientist and a super-magician. In Moses's day, the Egyptian magicians admitted, "This is the finger of God," when God supernaturally created life from dust. Paranormal deception has its limits.

5 | Miracles Can Confirm a Message of God

Any audacious person can claim to be a special messenger of God. I, for example, could declare: "I have received a fresh, new revelation that supersedes all the older revelations! I am the new high priest, high prophet, and high apostle—the LORD's mouthpiece. Come to me for the final and greatest installment of truth in these last days!" Now, if I did this, how might you and other reasonable people respond? Question my sanity and motives. Sure. You might rightly ask, "But why should we take you seriously? Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Can you show us a sign? Can you do anything supernatural like Moses or Elijah or Jesus did?" That would be very reasonable. If the best I can do is pull out a deck of cards, say "Chose a card! Any card!" and try to impress you with a little magic trick, everyone laughs, walks away, and warns others about the new crazy shyster on the block. But what if I exhibited some paranormal or possibly supernatural power? What if I could totally heal people who were born paralyzed or blind? What if I could raise people from the dead? What if I could create food for the masses out of almost nothing? Then you would have to get serious about determining whether acts of God are confirming a messenger and message of God. (For the record, I cannot even perform a decent card trick.)

Miracles are not acts that God does gratuitously and randomly. They have purpose and meaning. John's gospel account prefers the word "signs" (*sēmeia*) to the word miracles. John insisted that his account of seven of Jesus's many signs were written that we might believe Jesus is the Son of God (Jn. 20:31). When the LORD told Moses to talk to the elders of the twelve tribes of Jacob and then talk to Pharaoh, Moses asked why they would believe his message. God gave him multiple miraculous signs to show. Miracles validate the messenger (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4).

For contrast, the main prophet of Islam, the world's second largest religion, agreed that Moses and other Old Testament prophets did miracles that confirmed their legitimacy as messengers of God. Muhammad even admitted that Jesus raised people from the dead. But when Muhammad

was challenged to perform a miracle, he refused. Muhammad never performed any miracles whatsoever. The only “miracle” was that of the supposed eloquence of the Qur’an despite Muhammad’s inability to read or write. Rational people will set the bar higher than that.⁴

6 | The New Testament is Historically Reliable

The biggest problem to believing that the four gospel accounts and the rest of the New Testament books are historical rather than hysterical is that they are full of miracles that we do not know what to do with. Once we know that miracles are possible and that miracles have a specific purpose, it is easier to begin to trust the NT as true history rather than historiography mixed with myth and legend.

The writers of the gospel accounts were either eyewitnesses or they interview eyewitnesses. They record embarrassing details that prove they were not trying to create a legend. The testimonies are clearly early. Liberal critics have tried to say that the NT documents were written in the 2nd century and that such a gap allows time for myths to arise. Luke and Acts, for example, are examples of the finest historical reporting of antiquity. Dozens of details there have been cross-checked and verified and this points to Luke being a true first-rate historian. Colin Hemer, for example, gave seventeen reasons in for Luke’s gospel to have been written by 62 AD.⁵ The entire NT was completed by 80 A.D. for sure—and maybe even by 60 A.D. The P52 fragment (John Rylands papyrus) is dated to 117 A.D. And it was found in Egypt but written in Asia Minor—so John must have written it considerably earlier. The transmission of the manuscripts is excellent and unparalleled by other documents from the ancient world.

Even the toughest critics agree that the first epistle to the Corinthians was written around 54-55 A.D. That is a very early witness—no more than 25 years after the crucifixion and resurrection occurred. 1 Cor. 15:1-4 proves that the earliest Christian creedal elements were not later invention but early testimony to long-standing belief in the crucifixion and resurrection as historical fact.

⁴ Geisler’s *Twelve Points That Show Christianity is True* book is so strong on this point that I had it translated into Arabic. The PDF is available for free at See <https://bastionbooks.com/12-points-arabic/>.

⁵ Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*. Edited by Conrad H. Gempf (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990).

What the apostles wrote about what Jesus said and did (even miracles) is true history and not myth. When asking whether Jesus a liar, lunatic, legend, or the LORD, we have eliminated legend.

7 | Jesus Claimed to be God

Jesus made extraordinary claims—to be the Messiah, the Son of God, one with the Father, entrusted with the judgment of all humans, dying for the sins of the world, savior of those who believe, etc. The most audacious and meaningful claim was to be God. If we can believe that claim, there is no problem in believing all his other claims. There were strong indications in the Old Testament prophecies about Messiah/Christ that indicated he would not be a mere man. Jesus repeatedly got in trouble with the religious authorities for the crime of blasphemy. He healed people on the Sabbath to prove that he had authority to forgive sins. Who can forgive sins but God? He made himself equal to God. He claimed to be the I AM. He knew what he was saying and so did his hearers. The Jewish authorities accused him of blasphemy and coerced the Roman authorities to execute him. Jesus never backpedaled. He never said, “Whoa, you got me all wrong!” Instead, he doubled down on his divinity. They heard him correctly. Their problem was not that they misunderstood him. Their problem was unbelief in the face of supernatural attestation to his divinity.

8 | Jesus Proved to be God

Jesus not only claimed to be the Son of God but proved it in at least three ways. First, he fulfilled several prophecies made hundreds of years earlier by God’s prophets. Some say forty. Others argue over 400. The odds of someone meeting all these criteria are astronomically unlikely. Second, he led a sinless life. Every testimony about him even from his enemies and his judges and executioners and disciples was that Jesus was impeccable, innocent, morally excellent. Who else compares? Third, Jesus did many miracles—perhaps sixty that were recorded and many that were not. He healed the blind and the lame. He raised the dead. He walked on water. He calmed the storm. He cast out demons. This is all proof that God was with him, that God sent him, that he was filled with God’s Spirit, that his claims were true, and even that he was the Son of God. Fourth,

his words make it clear that he was no mere man. He knew things and spoke in ways that the previous prophets would not and could not.

Norm used a powerful visual of a target with a bullseye keyed to a manageable number of messianic prophecies that narrows the field down to one clear contender.

- 1) From Abraham's line (Gen. 22:18)
- 2) From the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10) (before 70 AD)
- 3) From David's line (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-2; Jer.23; 1 Ch17)
- 4) From Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- 5) Born of a virgin (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14)
- 6) Be preceded by a herald (Isa. 40:3-5)
- 7) Be "a prophet like Moses" (Deut. 18:15-19)
- 8) Both human and divine (Isa. 9:6-7; Ps.80:17)
- 9) Be presented to Israel 483 years after decree to rebuild Jerusalem (5 BC? 33 AD?!)(Dan. 9:26)
- 10) Enter as King into Jerusalem on a donkey as their Messiah-King (Zech. 9:9)
- 11) Would be rejected and executed (Isa. 49:1-13; Is. 50:4-9; Is. 53; Ps. 22; Dan 9:26) despite innocence
- 12) Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9)
- 13) Resurrected from the dead (Isa. 53:10-11; Ps. 16:10)

9 | Therefore, Jesus is God

The greatest confession of faith in the Old Testament is arguably the *Shema*: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is LORD alone" (Deut. 6:4). This is not competed with but completed by greatest confession of faith in the New Testament: "Jesus is LORD" (vis., Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5; c.f., Phil. 2:11; Acts 16:31; 1 Cor 1:9, 8:6; Phil. 3:20). No religious leader of any other competing religion can compete with Jesus. Jesus is the only one who claimed divinity and proved he was divine.

10 | Jesus (God) cannot Err

“Too err is human.” It is true that we humans think and communicate lies and untrue errors quite frequently. In his human nature, Jesus could have also erred theoretically. In his human nature, he was emptied of his omniscience (Phil. 2:5-8). He had the human *capacity* to do so but not the *necessity*. Being human does not force anyone to err. But there were other safeguards against error in place. Jesus remained in constant communion with God the Father and was careful to speak words given to him by God the Father (Jn. 7:16, 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:24, 17:8). He was anointed with and filled with God the Holy Spirit (Isa. 42:1, 61:1-3, Lk. 4:16-21, Mt. 12:17-21; Acts 10:38). God cannot communicate anything that is untrue. He cannot lie and cannot err. Therefore, in his divine nature, Jesus, God the Son, likewise did not have the capacity to think or communicate any errors at all. In his divine nature, he retained full omniscience and frequently proved to know things that other people could not have known. Jesus was 100% man and 100% God. His human nature and divine nature were in a hypostatic union that would guarantee that he could not speak any untrue thing.

11 | Jesus said the Bible is the Word of God

Those who follow the LORD Jesus Christ should learn and adopt his view of the Bible. He said the scriptures were imperishable (Mt. 5:17-18, c.f., Isa. 40:8), divinely inspired (Mt. 22:43), unbreakable and infallible (Jn. 10:35), the very Word of God (Mt. 15:3, 6), indestructible (Mt. 5:17-18), authoritative over all human traditions (Mt. 15:3, 6), inerrant and true (Mt. 22:29; Jn. 17:17), historically reliable (Mt. 19:4-5, 24:37-38, 12:40, 8:11, 12:42, 24:15, 19:4-5, Jn 3:12). He even placed the authority of the Torah over his own when rebuking Satan (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10). In using the phrase “It is written” fifteen or more times, he ascribed authority to the Bible. What God says is what the Bible says. What the Bible says is what God has said. Jesus confirmed that the OT was the very word of God and guaranteed that the New Testament would also be the word of God (Jn. 14:26, 15:26-27, 16:13). Jesus is the living Word of God and he cannot err. He said the Bible is the written word of God which cannot err.

12 | The Bible is True (and everything that contradicts it is false)

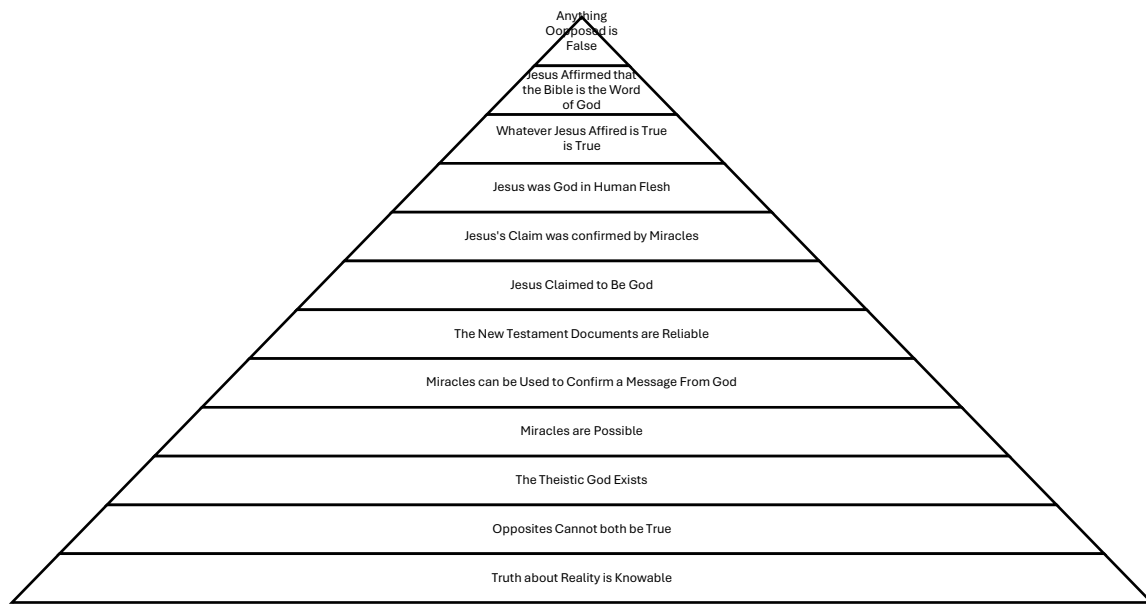
Jesus, the ultimate spokesman for God the Father, and equally divine himself, said that the scriptures of the old and new testaments are the very words of God. Jesus cannot err. Therefore, the Bible is true and without error. Anything that contradicts the Bible on any point is wrong on

that point of disagreement. This is not to say that there are no truths outside the Bible; there may be several. If I declare that I have a cell phone in my back pocket, that could be a truth that is not found in the Bible. Also, this does not mean there is no truth in other religious systems. There may be a few good truths in them. But whenever any of their claims clash with any propositions in the Bible, the non-biblical claims are in error and the Bible remains true.

Some Positive Remarks

While none of the individual links in this chain may seem particularly surprising or novel by themselves, the force of the argument is arguably felt in the way they are presented in a methodical and logical sequence. The foundation is simple and firm. Existence is the chief cornerstone. The next step is not some great leap in the dark but a small and steady step into the light. The type of God is narrowed down to the Christian God. It marches on methodically to the reliability of the Bible, which centers around the LORD Jesus Christ, and beelines it towards Jesus of the Bible. Geisler then does what few others do: from Jesus he goes back to the Bible—this time as authoritative and infallible. There is no room left for any other competing religion or philosophy to successfully compete with the Bible. Biblical Christianity is true and there is nothing else in its league that can even begin to compete with it.

No matter where someone is on their journey of faith, regardless of how lost or near they are, this method has something for them. The seeker is never asked to make an Olympian leap of faith. There are just twelve reasonable and short steps that form a powerful cumulative case. The seeker is not asked to sacrifice their mind and embrace irrationality. As faith in each of the lower (more foundational) points increases, faith in the higher points should become easier. It builds a stable and orderly schema in the mind.



The 12-point apologetic is very christocentric. It leads towards belief in Jesus as God. It introduces and enforces Jesus's view of the Bible. This then is an apologetic for a type of Christianity that is streamlined and lean. It is "mere Christianity," which lends itself well to credal orthodoxy. Affirming Christ's divinity and humanity, it leaves little or no room for heterodoxy, heresy, and highjacking by pseudo-Christian cults. While the method certainly could be embraced by apologists in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, it seems to segue best into the types of Christianity which champion the principles of *sola scriptura*, *solus Christus*, *sola fide*, the biblical Jesus (*sans* oral traditions and accretions), biblical authority, inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy. It does not lend itself well at all to theologically liberal or progressive forms of Christianity.

Some Negative Criticism

Overly optimistic about logic

Some may object that this is just too logical, rationalistic, scholastic, and overly optimistic about the role of human reason in the conversion process. Afterall, we cannot argue people into the kingdom. Either our ability to think, understand, and believe has been too damaged to think properly about God, much less believe, or, alternatively, this logical approach to God is too intellectual, too heady, and insufficiently spiritual or mystical.

Partial agreement can be offered. There are intellectual obstacles to faith that occupy the thinking mind and there are obstacles that are non-intellectual that occupy the feeling mind—emotional, socio-cultural, spiritual, etc. But doubts of the mind tend to pair with unbelief of the heart. The heart often uses intellectual obstacles as shields. When those shields are destroyed the heart is stripped bare before God, and the calculus of conversion changes. Doubts may change into profound questions to research and rethink. It has been said you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink. As true as that may be, it is generally good to give horses water. If they are thirsty, they will probably drink. To be realistic about it, we should aim for results like Paul had among the Athenians—some doubted, some believed, and some wanted to hear more. It is very possible that most doubted. But seeds were planted and may have germinated later. We can remove rocks from the field, add fertilizer, sew the seeds and water them. The germination and increase continue to depend on the LORD (1 Cor. 3:6-8; Mt. 13:24-30). There are many examples in the book of Acts of the Apostles that show the apostles and their coworkers reasoning with unregenerate Jews and God-fearers in the synagogues and to pagans outside of the synagogue.⁶

Consider a pragmatic test. Find some unbelievers and inform them that according to the Bible, the God-Man Jesus Christ died for the sake of forgiving their moral offenses to a holy God and that he was raised from the dead that they may have peace with God and eternal life. When they say they do not believe it, ask them why. Note how they respond. Do they report intellectual obstacles? And is that objection addressed somewhere in the 12-point apologetic?

Too broad and unfocused

Others might object that this system is simply overkill. Learning all of this makes you a jack of all trades and a master of none. Why not keep it simple and more focused? Just focus on the minimal level of historical reliability of the gospel accounts, the minimal facts of history, and the resurrection of Christ. Perhaps then everything else falls into place after that is believed. Faith in Christ will foster faith in the Bible and the God of the Bible. We should reduce the surface area we

⁶ See Joseph Holden and Christopher Haun, “How do we understand the relationship between reason and faith?” in William A. Dembski, Joseph M. Holden, and Casey Luskin, eds., *The Comprehensive Guide to Science and Faith: Exploring the Ultimate Questions about Life and the Cosmos* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2021), 33-34, or, for a longer (and free) version, see Christopher T. Haun, “What is the Proper Relationship Between Faith and Reason?” 2022. <https://cthaun.tech/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Exploring-the-Relationship-Between-Faith-and-Reason-CTHaun-Feb-2022.pdf>

need to defend to avoid being overstretched. Just defend the essentials. This gives them too many rabbit trails to go down and too many non-essentials they could end up doubting. Just defend the deity and resurrection of Jesus. Going into metaphysics and epistemology is excessive. Proceeding to Jesus's view of the Bible is too much. This is a non-essential doctrine that is an intramural debate inside the church which nonbelievers should not be exposed to.

Focusing strictly on the divinity and resurrection of Christ may be a fine strategy for some. But that focused approach will not work on many anymore. People's views on truth and God vary more today than they used to. Where there used to be an ambient respect for the Bible among many unbelievers, now there is more hostility. The Judeo-Christian inertia and cultural inheritance of past centuries and decades is fading fast in this post-Christian world. We are well on our way to looking more like the token minority theist on Mars Hill surrounded by Stoics (pantheists and panentheists) and Epicureans (atheists and deists). Many who identify as Christians today are not theists but panentheists. Many are arguably going in the direction of panentheism in the form of neotheism or open theism. If we cannot get our idea of God right, what good it is to believe that the Bible is the written word of God and Jesus is the living word of God and the Son of God? The twelve-point apologetic can speak to an unbeliever's doubts and uncertainties no matter where he or she happens to be in life's journey.

Admittedly, however, it is a real challenge to fit all twelve points into a one-hour presentation or a thirty-minute debate. I worry that I have not represented them well in this short paper. Norm preferred to deliver them one at a time in twelve one-hour teaching sessions. He also tailored shorter versions for shorter engagements. Norm attempted to repackage his apologetic for both popular audiences and for academics. Ultimately the twelve points boils down to four "ranges" or battles. It strikes a good balance between simple and complex. In a way, it is very simple: **Truth → God → Miracles → Bible** (as reliable) **→ Jesus → Bible** (as inspired/authoritative/infallible/inerrant). It is arguably the best balance between holistic and focused.

An overly complicated view of miracles

Some may suggest that Geisler presents an overly complex view of miracles. Many Christians cherish a healing or divine intervention that they have witnessed and they consider those miracles. Geisler offends them by saying, in essence, "That wasn't really a miracle." He separated direct,

supernatural miracles from indirect, natural, providential acts. He reserves the term “miracle” for an act of God that defies the laws of nature. Is he just splitting hairs? He says Satan cannot do true supernatural miracles but the Bible indicates that false prophets can perform great signs and wonders (Deut. 13:1-3; Ex. 7:11-22; Mt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22; 2 Th. 2:9; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Rev. 13:13-14, 16:14, 19:20). Even if there is technically a difference between paranormal and supernatural, if people cannot tell the difference, and for all practical purposes it is supernatural, then what is the difference? Exodus 14:21 says that God parted the Red Sea for Moses and the Israelites using a “strong east wind.” By Geisler’s own criteria, would not the parting of the Red Sea just be a matter of providence rather than of direct miracle?

It is probably good to embrace some complexity on the subject. That may ultimately be better than an oversimplified and unsophisticated view. Some are inclined to call too many things miracles and others may be inclined to call nothing miracles. Geisler’s view is worth taking the time to consider. If he is right, perhaps the distinctions he makes may help some see through the deception in a time where “even the elect would be deceived, if that were possible” (Mt. 24:24). One of the main activities of the demons is to deceive the minds of people (Jn. 8:44, Rev. 12:9, 2 Cor. 11:14, 1 Tim. 4:1) and one of the main ministries of the apostles and their coworkers was to “destroy strongholds... destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Paul does indicate that the “lawless one” will appear “with all power and signs and **lying** wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9, emphasis added). This suggests strongly that there is a difference between true signs and wonders and deceptive signs and wonders. As paranormal deception increases, perhaps there is apologetic value in distinguishing true divine miracles from deceptive paranormal pseudo-miracles. The miracles that Christ and his apostles performed do need to be seen as being in a different category than the unusual healings that sometimes happen when people pray. On the other hand, perhaps there are times to not make too fine of a distinction between Miracles and miracles, between denotative and connotative, technical and popular notions about miracles. Just be advised that feathers do get ruffled here.

The Vertical Argument for God does not “land” for most

Some might argue that of the five arguments for the existence of God that Norm gave, his favorite argument, the vertical cosmological argument, is too abstruse. It is the type of argument that students may get excited about after they have had a full semester of thomistic metaphysics. But

it does not lend itself well to one-hour debates or presentations where the audience does not have much familiarity with ancient thought on being and causality.

There is a challenge here. But perhaps this is a challenge to be accepted rather than quickly abandoned. Norm articulated the vertical argument in a variety of ways over the years. Others are still attempting to rearticulate it and use it today. Perhaps its potential has not been fully tapped yet but could in the future.⁷ Or perhaps this argument is more like an acorn than a mustard seed. Plant the acorn anyway, water it, and several decades later the hearer may have a majestic oak to enjoy in the garden of their intellect. Personally, the moral argument appealed to me the most in my late teens, the kalam argument in my twenties, the design argument in my forties, and now, the vertical argument in my fifties.

Conclusion

The International Society of Christian Apologetics embraces and supports many types of Christian apologists using a variety of apologetic methods.⁸ This is not an attempt to champion any one school or method of apologetics over another. But let us not forget that ISCA was started twenty years ago by Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan, two classical apologists who both used, preferred, and pioneered the twelve-point apologetic. Several of the first presidents of ISCA also used and preferred it. Some ISCA presidents may have simply respected it but never found a need to use it themselves. It certainly is not the only way to defend the faith. Regardless, it is part of the original ISCA DNA. And it helps explain some of the distinctives ISCA has. It helps explain why sometimes we place emphasis on the foundational end of the twelve-point spectrum with epistemology, metaphysics, and logic and at other times we champion the pinnacle—a Christocentric view of the Bible as divinely inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative. It is part of what makes us special. Continuing with the twelve-point system may help prevent our salt from losing its saltiness.

If you have not done so already, consider adding its tools to your toolbox and see if bolsters your own faith and the faith of your audiences. Adopt part or all of it. Adapt, tailor, and improve

⁷ I discuss this problem and its possible solutions further in Christopher T. Haun, *The Geislerian Argument for God* (Arlington, TX: Bastion Books, 2026).

⁸ This paper was presented at the 20th annual meeting of the International Society of Christian Apologetics in Wichita, Kansas, on September 11th, 2026. <https://isca-apologetics.org>

it. It can mesh with and enrich other apologetic methodologies. It may help believers grow and persevere in their faith, help sincere seekers come to faith in Christ, and help some skeptics and critics become sincere seekers. It should also prove valuable as pre-evangelistic apologetics in service of evangelism and missionary work.

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* Highly recommended for learning Norm Geisler's 12-point apologetic.

Appendix 1 | Twelve Points & Preconditions of Theology

Category	Geisler's Twelve Steps That Show Christianity is True	Chap	Geisler's Systematic Theology - Vol 1. Preconditions to Theology
Pre-evangelism	1 Truth about reality is knowable.	Ch. 4	A God who has revealed Himself in GENERAL revelation (the revelational precondition)
Pre-evangelism	2 Opposites cannot both be true (The Law of Noncontradiction).	Ch. 5	Revelation is subject to the laws of logic (the rational precondition)
Pre-evangelism	3 It is true the theistic God exists.	Ch. 2	There is a theistic God who created the world (the metaphysical precondition)
Pre-evangelism	4 If God exists, then miracles are possible.	Ch. 3	God can miraculously intervene in the world (the supernatural precondition)
Pre-evangelism	5 Miracles performed in connection with a truth claim are acts of God to confirm the truth of God through a messenger of God.	Ch. 11	(the historical precondition)
Pre-evangelism	6 The New Testament is historically reliable.		
Pre-evangelism	7 As witnessed in the New Testament, Jesus claimed to be God.		
Pre-evangelism	8 Jesus' claim to divinity was proven by miracles, especially the Resurrection.		
Evangelism	9 Therefore, Jesus is God.		
Evangelism	10 Because Jesus is God, whatever Jesus affirmed as true, is true.		
Evangelism & Discipleship	11 Jesus affirmed that the Bible is the Word of God.	Ch. 4	a God who has revealed Himself in SPECIAL revelation (the revelational precondition)
Evangelism & Discipleship	12 Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God and whatever is opposed to any biblical truth is false.	Ch. 8	true exclusively (the oppositional precondition—chapter 8);
Evangelism & Discipleship	[Assumes the literal interpretation of Scripture]	Ch. 6	Special revelation contains objectively meaningful statements. . . (the semantical precondition)
		Ch. 7	that are true objectively. . . (the epistemological precondition)
		Ch. 9	which can be properly understood in analogous language. . . (the linguistic precondition)
		Ch. 10	the meaning and truth of which can be understood objectively. . . (the hermeneutical precondition)
		Ch. 11	including those elements relating to historical events. . . (the historical precondition)
		Ch. 12	revelation can be systematized (the methodological precondition)

Appendix 2 | The Fourteen Points that Show Christianity is True

Here is an outline of Norman Geisler's apologetic as published in the appendix titled "Reasoning to Christianity from Ground Zero" in Geisler, Norman L., & Brooks, Ronald M. *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990) 291-292.

1. There are self-evident truths (e.g., "I exist," "Logic applies to reality").
2. Truth corresponds to reality.
3. Truth is knowable (all other views are self-defeating).
4. One can proceed from self-evident truths to the existence of God.
 - A. The argument from Creation (proceeds from "I exist")
 - B. The argument from morals (proceeds from "Values are undeniable")
 - C. The argument from design (proceeds from "Design implies a designer")
5. God is a necessary Being (argument from being).
6. My existence is not necessary (evident from the definition of a necessary Being).
7. Therefore, theism is true (there is a necessary Being beyond the world who has created the contingent things in the world and intervenes in the world).
 - A. The objection from the problem of evil can be solved.
 - B. The objection to miracles can be solved.
8. The Bible is a historically reliable document.
 - A. History is an objective study of the past.
 - B. There is great historical, archaeological, and scientific evidence to confirm the reliability of the Bible. (Corollary: The Bible gives a reliable record of the teaching of Jesus Christ.)
9. Jesus claimed to be both fully human and fully God.
10. He gave evidence to support this claim.
 - A. The fulfillment of prophecy
 - B. His miraculous and sinless life
 - C. His resurrection
11. Therefore, Jesus is both fully human and fully God.
12. Whatever God teaches is true.
13. Jesus (God) taught that the Old Testament was the inspired Word of God and He promised the New Testament.
14. Therefore, both the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God.

Appendix 3 | The Apologetic of Search Ministries

<i>The Search for Meaning</i>	<i>I'm Glad You Asked</i>	<i>Answering the Tough Ones</i>	<i>Questioning God?</i>
Is there more to life than this?			Life is good, so why be concerned with God? Can we know the truth about anything (especially about God)?
Can we really know God exists?	Does God exist?	How do we know that God exists?	Why should I believe that God exists? How can a person believe in God in this scientific age?
	Why believe in miracles?	Are miracles possible?	How can a rational person accept the miracle stories in the Bible? Isn't the Bible out of step with the times?
	Isn't Christianity just a psychological crutch?	Isn't Christianity just a psychological crutch?	Don't Christians use their faith as emotional crutch?
Why Should I Trust the Bible?	Is the Bible reliable?	Is the Bible Reliable?	Why should I trust what the Bible has to say?
Why Is the world so messed Up? & Why Doesn't God Fix the World?	Why do the innocent suffer?	Why do the innocent suffer?	If God is real, why is there so much evil and suffering?
Who Is Jesus, Really?			
Why Did Jesus Have to Die?			
Did Jesus Actually Rise from the Dead?			
How Can Anyone Be Sure About Faith?	Will God judge those who never heard about Christ?	What about those who have never heard?	Will God judge people who have never heard of Jesus?
What About Other Religions?	Is Christ the only way to God?	Is Jesus the only way to God?	With so many religions, why say that Christianity is the only way? If God is loving, why would he send anyone to Hell?
	If Christianity is true, why are there so many hypocrites?	How about the hypocrites?	Haven't Christians caused more harm than good?
	What about good works?	Can good deeds get us to Heaven?	I'm a good person--Isn't that enough?
What does it mean to follow Jesus?	What does the Bible mean by believe? Isn't salvation by faith too simple?	What does it mean to believe? Isn't just believing too simple?	If Christianity is true, where do I start?
What happens after we die?	Can a person be sure of their salvation?	Can anyone be sure he is going to heaven?	

The apologetic framework glimpsed in the chapter titles above are taken from the three books and one set of dialogues published by Search Ministries:

Boa, Kenneth and Larry Moody. *I'm Glad You Asked: In Depth Answers to Difficult Questions About Christianity*, 2nd ed. Search Ministries, 1982, 2013.

Dewitt, David A. *Answering the Tough Ones: Common Questions About Christianity*. Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980.

Hopper, John. *Questioning God? Answers to Questions Worth Asking*. Fort Worth, TX: Search Ministries, 2021. <https://searchnational.org/questioning-god>

Kraftson, Bill and Lamar Smith. *The Search for Meaning: Two Friends Discuss Honest Questions About God*. Fort Worth, TX: Search Ministries, 2009. <https://www.thesearchformeaning.org>
(←Free recordings in English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese.)

Their system is partially gleaned from and overlaps well with Geisler's 12-point framework. It has less structure and method than the twelve-point argument but addresses most of the same points. Some of the authors were students of Norm Geisler in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The questions they address reflect the most common obstacles faced when doing conversational evangelism and friendship evangelism in various cities in North America over the last fifty years. These books may be slightly less philosophical and academic than some of Norm's offerings, but they may be practical for pre-evangelism among popular audiences.