

Neighborly Apologetics

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Neighborly Apologetics 101, Part 2:

Foundations & Basics

From Relationship-Building to Prayerful Dependence in a Hostile Culture

In the latter half of his [January 3](#), webinar on "Neighborly Apologetics," Dr. Del Tackett shifts from foundational principles to practical application, real-world examples, and theological depth. Covering timestamps 24:14 to 48:51, he emphasizes that effective defense of the faith in today's world requires deep relationships, humble gentleness, and utter reliance on God's sovereign work—culminating in a call to action and closing prayer.

Tackett acknowledges that building genuine relationships feels "quite foreign to modern Christianity." Programs often prioritize events over bonds, yet Jesus modeled the opposite: forming a small group, deepening ties with Peter, James, and John, and gradually revealing truth. This relational priority becomes urgent in a culture Tackett believes may have been "given over" by God to a depraved mind (Romans 1:24–28). The progression—sexual immorality, dishonorable passions, then a mind incapable of reasoning with God ("Come, let us reason together," Isaiah 1:18)—renders purely academic apologetics ineffective. Logic hits brick walls or provokes hostility because depravity impairs rational response to truth. Christianity remains fundamentally logical—God made us rational beings, as seen in Deuteronomy's blessings/curses proposition—but cultural conditions demand leading with relationships, responding graciously to questions that arise organically.

To illustrate, Tackett recounts Dr. Rosaria Butterfield's transformation. Once a Syracuse University professor, militant pro-abortionist, LGBTQ advocate, and cohabitating with a partner, Butterfield opposed biblical values entirely. Her conversion began with "500 meals with enemies"—shared dinners hosted by Pastor Ken Smith and his wife Floy. Without agenda or pressure, they loved her consistently. Over time, trust formed; only then did questions emerge. Butterfield later told Tackett that an argumentative approach like his former style would have kept her entrenched. This mirrors patterns in **I Once Was Lost**, where conversions consistently followed deep, trusting relationships before intellectual engagement. Ken's wisdom—sharing truth only as deep as the relationship could bear—exemplifies true discernment.

This leads to 2 Timothy 2:24–26: the Lord's servant must be kind, patient, and gentle in correcting opponents, "in the hope that God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil." Gentleness and grace recur across Scriptures (1 Peter 3, Colossians 4). Crucially, repentance is God's gift—not achieved through superior arguments or force. Tackett stresses prayer's primacy: apologetics rests on God opening eyes, hearts, and minds first. Without divine initiative, efforts fail. He prays believers will see others "come to their senses," as with Nebuchadnezzar (restored after beast-like humiliation) or the Gadarene demoniac (found "in his right mind" post-deliverance). Spiritual

warfare context matters: opponents are often captive to the devil. In deep relationships, hard truths can be spoken lovingly—even bluntly—without offense, as trust allows.

Academic apologetics retains value as a foundation. Tools from evidential studies equip answers when questions arise (e.g., problem of evil for a grieving neighbor). Yet in this moment, relationships must lead; prayer invites God to precede.

Tackett outlines 12–13 categories of common stumbling blocks (from a survey of thousands), to be covered over one to two years: evil and suffering (emotionally hard, logically resolvable); absolute truth vs. relativism; Christian exclusivity; faith and reason; free will/sovereignty; God's existence/nature; human goodness, judgment, hell; hypocrisy; Jesus' claims/resurrection; miracles; science/evolution (contrary to Romans 1's evident creation); Scripture's veracity; and "burning issues" like sexuality and abortion. Sensitive topics demand deep relationships, not public debates.

He invites feedback on starting points via DelTackett.com, noting the royal law context: Christian families (including singles) commit to neighbors' shalom, turning the world upside down one relationship at a time.

Mark wraps logistics: chat feedback favors "burning issues" and "evil/suffering"; recordings, slides, and resources (articles, Engagement Project, events in places like North Pole, Alaska) forthcoming. Tackett closes in prayer, thanking God for senses, Scripture, and reason; petitioning open doors, hearts, and minds for sacrificial neighbor-love—all for divine glory.

This segment crystallizes neighborly apologetics: humble, relational, prayer-dependent witness amid cultural drift. It challenges believers to invest long-term, trust God's timing, and let grace-seasoned lives speak before words do.

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Neighborly Apologetics 101, Part 2:

Foundations & Basics

Relationships, Gentleness, and Prayer in a Hardened Culture

In the second half of his [January 3](#), webinar, Dr. Del Tackett moves from theory to practice, showing why neighborly apologetics demands deep relationships, humble gentleness, and total dependence on God.

He admits that building meaningful relationships feels alien to much of modern Christianity, where programs often replace personal bonds. Yet Jesus began His ministry by forming a small group and deepening ties with a few before unveiling greater truth. In a culture possibly handed over to a “depraved mind” (Romans 1:28)—where rational appeals to God’s logic increasingly provoke hostility or indifference—leading with academic arguments alone is futile. Christianity is rational, but depravity impairs reasoning. Therefore, believers must invest in fewer people, earn trust, and respond graciously to questions that arise naturally.

Tackett illustrates with Dr. Rosaria Butterfield’s story: a former militant LGBTQ advocate and pro-abortion professor whose life changed through “500 meals with enemies” hosted by Ken and Floy Smith. No agenda, just consistent love. Trust formed slowly; only then did questions emerge. Butterfield later said an argumentative approach would have kept her where she was. This pattern—deep relationship first, inquiry second—matches findings in **I Once Was Lost**.

Scripture reinforces the posture: 2 Timothy 2:24–26 calls the Lord’s servant to gentle correction “in the hope that God may perhaps grant them repentance... and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil.” Repentance is God’s gift, not our achievement. Prayer therefore precedes apologetics—pleading for God to open eyes, hearts, and minds. Without divine initiative, human effort fails.

Tackett outlines twelve (plus one) categories of common objections—evil and suffering, relativism, exclusivity, free will/sovereignty, God’s existence, human goodness, hypocrisy, Jesus’ resurrection, miracles, evolution, Scripture’s reliability, and today’s “burning issues” (sexuality, abortion)—to be explored over coming sessions. Sensitive topics require trusted relationships, not public debate.

The webinar closes with logistics, resource pointers, and Tackett’s prayer: gratitude for reason and Scripture, and a plea for open doors and sacrificial neighbor-love—all for God’s glory.

Neighborly apologetics is humble, long-term, prayer-dependent witness: love first, listen well, speak grace, and trust God for the rest.

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