

APOLOGETICS 101

SURPRISED BY TRUTH

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OVERVIEW

APOLOGETICS 101

SUMMARY

The word “apologetics” has a technical meaning. It refers to *explaining the Catholic faith to those who disagree with it or don’t understand it*. The term comes from the Greek word “apologia”, which means explanation. In this use of the term, we are not talking about making an apology for some kind of offense or mistake, but rather explaining why the Catholic faith is true, reasonable, and redemptive. All mature Catholics need to be able to do this in order to fulfill their mission as witnesses of Christ and missionaries in the world.

This Study Circle Guide simply enables you to utilize for small group study a series of books containing testimonies of a wide variety of people who converted to the Catholic faith. These people come from different backgrounds: Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, Mormon, fallen-away Catholic, etc. Each chapter of these books contains a personal narration of how the person made his or her way into (or back into) the Catholic Church. The series of books is called *Surprised by Truth* and is edited by one of our generation’s great apologists, Patrick Madrid.

There are two ways to study apologetics, either argument by argument or through real-life case studies. The *Surprised by Truth* series offers a powerful opportunity for the second way, which we highly recommend because of its existential weight. Understanding the path taken by real converts to Catholicism equips you to help others take that path much more effectively than simply understanding abstract arguments divorced from real personal journeys.

CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

Catholic Doctrine; Apologetics; Apostolate

RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF SESSIONS

There are three volumes in the *Surprised by Truth* series. The first volume contains 11 chapters/testimonies, the second volume contains 15, and the

third volume contains 10. Each of those chapters could easily serve as the raw material for one session (which would make a total of 36 sessions). You could work through one volume at a time or also intersperse one of these sessions among other group studies you are doing (e.g. having an Apologetics 101 session every month). You could also preview the chapters and decide which of them would be most useful for your group, and limit your study to that number of sessions.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- The study questions provided by this Study Circle Guide.
- Copies of the relevant volumes or the relevant chapters for each participant. These can be found on Amazon.com or on Patrick Madrid’s [website](#).

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Anyone interested in the topics or in need of more knowledge to be able to defend the Catholic faith against critics.

HOW MUCH HOMEWORK?

This depends on how you decide to arrange your study. We recommend either of two basic approaches.

- I. Have every participant read each chapter and answer the study questions before your meeting. Then use the meeting time to share and discuss your answers, one by one. If this method is chosen, here are the recommended study questions that each participant should answer while reading and studying each chapter:
 - What prejudices against Catholicism did the author of this chapter have before converting? Where did those prejudices come from? Do you know or have you known anyone who has similar prejudices?



- What was the first turning point in the author’s journey? In other words, what first opened that person up to hearing the truth of the Catholic faith and why? How does that experience resonate with your own faith-journey?
- What were two other major turning points along the way, and why were they so impactful?
- What factors slowed down the author’s conversion and why? In other words, what influences worked against the movement of grace in this person’s life?
- What sacrifices did the author have to make in order to be faithful to how God was acting in his or her life? Where did the author find the strength for those sacrifices?
- What rational argument (logical, biblical, historical...) that helped this person along their journey would you like to remember in order to be able to use it in future conversations?
- What aspects of the author’s journey surprised you the most, and why?
- What aspects of the author’s journey could you most easily identify with, and why?
- What lesson do you think God is trying to teach you personally through the experience of the author?
- What are you going to do this week as a result of what you learned through studying this testimony?

2. Assign one chapter to each participant. Each participant only reads and studies the chapter assigned, preparing a summary and evaluation for the group. When the group meets for the Study Circle, one participant presents his or her summary and evaluation and then fields questions and directs the group discussion on the chapter. If this option is chosen, here are some additional recommended questions to address during the preparation and discussion:

- Briefly outline the journey narrated in the chapter.

- Introduce your summary and evaluation by telling the group the three main points you would like to make.
- Go through whichever of the above-mentioned questions you find most relevant to this author’s journey in light of the interests and needs of your Study Circle.
- Open up the session for questions and observations from the other participants.

NOTES




Lined writing area for notes.

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