

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR TEXAS MISSIONS

*Presentation Accompanies: Adult Study Guide
Mary Hill Davis Offering® for Texas Missions*

OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE SO OTHERS WILL HEAR

The Mary Hill Davis Offering® for Texas Missions provides funding for over 70 ministries across Texas. When you give, you are providing opportunities for people across the state to share the love of Jesus with those who need to know Him as Savior. The lesson will focus on the [un]Apologetic Conference, a ministry of the Center for Church Health.

2025 GIVING GOAL: \$3.5 MILLION

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

– MATTHEW 5:13–16

MINISTRY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: [UN]APOLOGETIC CONFERENCE

Eric Hernandez is the Apologetics Lead & Millennial specialist at Texas Baptists. He works with Texas Baptist churches and institutions to plan the [un]Apologetic Conference. The Conference provides opportunities for participants to engage in conversations and to equip individuals and churches with tools to tackle issues with Biblical truth. Issues include topics such as

- deconstruction movement
- faith and science
- gender identity and sexuality
- the problem of evil and suffering
- Biblical reliability
- the existence of God
- truth of Christianity



S.A.L.T. MINISTRIES

- » **SERVE MINISTRIES**
- » **ADVANCE MISSIONS LEADERSHIP**
- » **LOVE THE LEAST OF THESE**
- » **TELL MINISTRIES**

- The [un]Apologetic Conference is a Serve Ministry whose ministries open the door for more effective sharing of the Gospel.
- Funding from the Mary Hill Davis Offering® for Texas Missions is used to plan, promote, and provide workshop leaders and keynote speakers.

WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

The definition of Apologetics is giving a defense for **what** we believe and **why** we believe it. First Peter 3:15, provides a clear mandate for the Biblical task of apologetics.

*But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a **defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

–1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

APOLOGETICS: THE WHAT

- Trust the authority and reliability of the Bible
- Know what the Bible says about
 - God
 - Jesus
 - Holy Spirit
- Defend the hope that is within you
- Respond to anyone who asks with gentleness and respect

QUESTIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO GROWTH

TIM BARNETT, AN APOLOGIST, SAYS:

- asking questions is a crucial part of Christian discipleship
- doubts are a normal part of this journey

QUESTIONS LEAD TO SOLUTIONS

STUDIES ON THE BRAIN REVEAL THAT
A CERTAIN PART OF THE BRAIN IS
ACTIVATED WHEN QUESTIONS ARE ASKED.

When you ask a question instead of giving the answer, the entire brain gets active as it reflects, releasing serotonin (allowing it to relax). This encourages the gathering of intelligence from all areas of the brain, allowing for more insight than would happen if you provided solutions to others. New neuronal connections begin to be made as the brain moves closer to finding solutions.

The Neuroscience of Asking Insightful Questions

TURN AND TALK

- » Discuss this quote on how the brain works when engaged with questions.
- » What has been your experience with individuals who are deep thinkers and have many questions about Christianity and theology?
- » How can the church respond to individuals who are questioning or doubting Christian practices, ideology, and theology?



THE WHAT: FOUNDATIONS

- What do we believe?
- What are the foundations that are essential to Christian faith?
- Do we know why we believe what we believe?
- Can we articulate our beliefs with others?
- How does **defend** differ from **debate**?

TURN AND TALK

Which of these questions stands out to you the most?

What other questions or thoughts would you add to this list?

- » What do we believe?
- » What are the foundations that are essential to Christian faith?
- » Do we know why we believe what we believe?
- » Can we articulate our beliefs with others?
- » How does defend differ from debate?

WHY APOLOGETICS?

THE DE-CHURCHING MOVEMENT

- 40 million people have left the Church and abandoned Christianity.
- This is more than those that came to faith in Jesus during the Great Awakening and all the worldwide Billy Graham Crusades.

DECONSTRUCTION MOVEMENT

- Deconstruction is a process of critically examining and questioning long-held beliefs, potentially leading to a rejection or re-evaluation of beliefs.
- In the deconstruction movement, most individuals do not reconstruct their beliefs but are in a never-ending cycle of deconstructing.
- A characteristic of deconstructing is that it never ends.

TURN AND TALK

- » Have you heard about the deconstruction movement?
- » Do you know someone who is in the process of deconstructing their faith?
- » Has the deconstructing process affected your relationship with this individual?

IMPACT OF A POST-CHRISTIAN CULTURE

**3 OUT OF 4 COLLEGE
STUDENTS (70%)**

abandon Christianity during college

3 OUT OF 5 STUDENTS

disconnect with the church by age 15

TURN AND TALK

- » When you read these statistics on how students are leaving or rejecting Christianity, what is your response?

THE INFLUENCE OF INFLUENCERS

SOCIAL MEDIA

- About 25 years in the making
- Adult time on Social Media:
 - 2 hours and 24 minutes
- Gen Z time on Social Media:
 - 2 hours and 43 minutes
- Gen Z time on phones:
 - 6 hours and 27 minutes

DECONSTRUCTION MOVEMENT

- Began about 25 years ago
- Pastors and musicians denouncing Christianity
- Advancement of Consumer Christianity
- Lack of theological depth taught in churches
- Church is harmful, not hopeful



TURN AND TALK

- » What do you know about Social Media platforms?
- » How is the content viewed by individuals shaping their worldview as well as their Biblical worldview?
- » How can the church respond to the deconstruction of faith and the influence of Social Media?

DISCUSSION 1

A young adult scrolls through a platform and sees a caption related to a lingering question about faith. She stops and listens. The comment of the influencer affirms her doubts about the Bible being true and trustworthy. She wants to hear more and clicks on subscribe. Every time the influencer posts a new video; she gets a message. As she listens to the videos, she begins to shift her thinking to agree with the poster who has left the church and no longer believes that the foundations of Christianity are true. She starts looking for others who are deconstructing their faith. This young adult is your daughter, your granddaughter, or maybe even yourself.

What could be some next steps with this person (or yourself)? Identify the questions or doubts concerning Biblical theology. Dive into the Word of God to determine passages to read together. Avoid giving the “right answers” and allow the Holy Spirit to guide conversations. Be very patient as the process of reconstructing one’s faith may be long.

DISCUSSION 2

A friend tells you they believe all roads lead to God and there is no one right way. Everyone's truth is true. How might you proceed in conversations with this friend? What are some next steps to present the Gospel of Jesus in a non-threatening way?

DISCUSSION 3

Discuss Hajir's journey to faith in Jesus. Identify the factors that led him to decide to follow Jesus. How can we be like those individuals in his life?

SCRIPTURE APPLICATION

MATTHEW 5:13–16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

We are the salt. We must be salt that is useful and purposeful in a world that is rejecting the basic foundational truths of Christianity.

We are the light. Darkness will increase with a Post-Christian culture. Our light must increase as we gain understanding of the world in which we live.

SCRIPTURE CHALLENGE

But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a **defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.**

–1 PETER 3:15 (ESV)

PREPARE YOUR DEFENSE

SUGGESTIONS

- Attend an [un]Apologetic Conference. Visit txb.org/events for more information.
- Study apologetics by selecting a resource found on the Texas Baptists website (txb.org).
- Listen to a podcast by an apologetic.
- Gain an understanding of the deconstruction movement that is rapidly growing globally.

PRAY

- Pray for opportunities to share Jesus and for confidence in sharing your faith and hope in Jesus.
- Pray for a gentle spirit and humbleness when engaging in conversations with those who have differing beliefs about God, Jesus, and the Bible.
- Pray that you can defend, not debate, Biblical truth and authority.
- Pray for Eric Hernandez as he leads boldly to equip individuals and churches with tools to share Jesus in a Post-Christian culture.
- Pray for churches to engage with Eric to plan and provide additional conferences that will impact generations to come.