

***Every Believer Confident: Apologetics for the Ordinary Christian*, by Mark J. Farnham**
Westminster Book of the Month
April 2, 2025

"... always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you ..."
— 1 Pet 3:15

"Ordinary Christians can learn to defend the Christian faith, share the gospel, shake the unbelief of non-Christians, present the Christian worldview, and lead people to saving faith in Jesus Christ."
— Mark Farnham

1. Discuss the core issue at hand (as best you can tell) in one of the following conversations.
2. Depending on the conversation, how can you:
 - Gently work out the implications of the person's worldview in order to reveal problems with it?
 - Engage the conversation towards ultimate "worldview" issues?
 - Present the Christian alternative in a way that connects with that *particular* person's concerns or desires?

CASE STUDY #1

When you mentioned to your neighbor, Selina, that you believe in God and that he is central to everything you do, she scoffed.

"There is no God—at least not the kind of God you believe in. But that's OK. We don't need God anymore. We can be good without him. We can make our own meaning in life. Christianity is oppressive anyway. It tries to tell you who you are and how you ought to live, and it threatens terrible judgment on those who don't conform. We don't need that in our world anymore. What we need is empowerment to be who we want to be. That is true freedom.

"I tried religion at one time in my life, but it didn't do anything for me. I challenged Jesus to make himself real to me and reveal himself to me, but I felt nothing. I know other people have religious experiences that mean a lot to them, but I feel like all that matters is having experiences that give you a sense of connection with the world. That can be found in religion but in all sorts of other things as well. What matters is that you feel a part of something bigger than yourself. Organized religion, however, is too restrictive. It's better to figure out what works for you and just do it."

Selina's views are quite a jumble. What are some questions you could ask to challenge her to consider the implications of her beliefs?

CASE STUDY #2

Your longtime friend Holly mentions in passing that she has taken up the practice of "grounding"—standing barefoot in her front yard each morning to realign her body's electrical current with the earth's. When you don't respond right away (because you have never heard of such a thing), she presses on to tell you what a positive change has taken place in her life ever since she started seeking greater connection to the earth.

"I was never much of an outdoorsy person, but lately I can't get enough of the wonders of nature and the power that lies within it. I'm reading about cosmic connections, and it has created in me a hunger to know more. I grew up in the suburbs, and my family drove everywhere, even if we were just going to the corner store half a mile away. I was always inside by dark, so I never spent any time looking at the stars. To think that we are stardust floating in the universe gives me such a sense of being special, unlike anything I've felt before.

"I started attending a gathering of witches to learn more about amplifying the voice of nature in my life. I am not a witch myself, but I love their connection to nature, their holistic treatments for all kinds of ailments, and their access to the latent power in the universe. I am hoping to learn even more practices that will help me discover the power within me. I feel like this is something we are missing in our technological age. We are almost treated like machines in the modern world, and I am coming to see that we are more like trees that need nutrients from the soil of the earth."

CASE STUDY #3

Jerry tells you that he grew up in a religious family and has always been a Christian. A few years ago, however, he began to question whether he really believes the Bible. "I am starting to think that maybe it really is a book of mythology. Floating axe-heads, the sun going backward, someone being swallowed by a whale? I guess I never really paid attention to how fantastic its stories are. How can someone who believes the Bible accept such really outlandish stories as factually true?

"Listen, I asked Jesus into my heart when I was five years old and committed my life to him over and over in my teen years. I had emotional experiences of God and surrendered to him every week in church. But recently I am starting to think that the whole Christian culture is just a big business designed to prey on people's desire for there to be something more. I no longer feel anything when the lights dim and the band plays worship music. I try, but I can't conjure up those emotions anymore. Now I am starting to think that's what was happening to me all along—I was conjuring emotion. Once that emotion starts to fade, the miraculous seems less plausible, and it all starts to seem manipulated."

What would you say to Jerry?