

*Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*

Available July 2015

\$22, 270 pages, hardcover

978-0-8308-3699-4

*"In this landmark work, I am thrilled to see Os's unique thinking on these crucial subjects, co-extensive with a lifetime of doing apologetics. It is a must-read for anyone interested in engaging the skeptic or seeker. Few thinkers today rise to the level that Os does, even as he plumbs the depth of vital issues in defense of the historic Christian faith."*

— Ravi Zacharias, author and speaker

## The Subversive Power of Persuasion

"The whole world has taken up apologetics without ever using or knowing the idea as Christians understand it. We are all apologists now, if only on behalf of 'the Daily Me' or 'the Tweeted Update' that we post for our virtual friends and our cyber community. The great goals of life, we are told, are to gain the widest possible public attention and to reach as many people in the world with our products — and always, our leading product is Us."

"Are Christians ready for this new age?"

So writes Os Guinness in his magnum opus *Fool's Talk*. This latest from the prolific author and editor of over thirty books is Guinness's first time tackling the subject of apologetics and evangelism, digging into how and why traditional cookie-cutter approaches simply don't work anymore. Presenting the art and power of creative persuasion — the ability to talk to people who are closed to what we are saying — he provides a fresh way of looking at Christian witness for today.

This urgent need for creative persuasion is a result of our post-Christian context, writes Guinness. Public life has become markedly more secular and private life infinitely more diverse; meanwhile, traditional approaches to apologetics assume that people are open, interested and needy for spiritual insight when increasingly most people are not. Yet many Christians still rely on cookie-cutter approaches to evangelism and apologetics.

"*Fool's Talk* is a direct exposition of the inner logic and rhetoric of persuasion, showing how hearers are moved from unbelief and doubt to conviction of the truth of the Christian faith," said James W. Sire, author of *The Universe Next Door*. "Guinness's focus is not only on the nature of effective argument but the character, ethics and faith of the apologist. Intellectually profound and immensely practical. I loved the book. So will you."

Following the tradition of Erasmus, Pascal, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis and Malcolm Muggeridge, Guinness demonstrates how apologetic persuasion requires both the rational and the imaginative. Persuasion is subversive, turning the tables on hearers' assumptions to surprise them with signals of transcendence and the credibility of the gospel.

"Faced with a plethora of modern challenges, from technology to globalization to political sales talk to moral relativism, we are tempted to develop a single, safe, reactionary method — ten steps to the punch line," said William Edgar, professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary. "Guinness does the opposite. Like G. K. Chesterton in an earlier age, Guinness reminds us that truth is quite unlikely, that is, dubious to unaided reason. He advocates a broad range of arguments, all of them imaginative, but all of them pointing to the surprising truth, the unpredictable love of God."

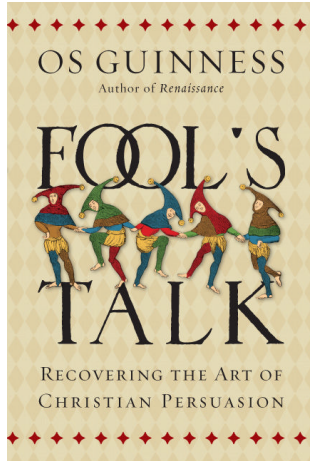
INTERVARSITY PRESS

Visit [ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)



**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:**

Krista Carnet, broadcast publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kkcarnet@ivpress.com](mailto:kkcarnet@ivpress.com)  
 Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [awissman@ivpress.com](mailto:awissman@ivpress.com)  
 Diana Verhagen, online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4012 or [dverhagen@ivpress.com](mailto:dverhagen@ivpress.com)  
[ivpress.com/books](http://ivpress.com/books)



*Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*

Available July 2015

\$22, 270 pages, hardcover

978-0-8308-3699-4

“Everyone is now in the business of relentless self-promotion – presenting themselves, explaining themselves, defending themselves, selling themselves or sharing their inner thoughts and emotions as never before in human history.”

## “I post, therefore I am.”

We are all apologists now, and we stand at the dawn of the grand age of human apologetics, or so some are saying because our wired world and our global era are a time when expressing, presenting, sharing, defending and selling ourselves have become a staple of everyday life for countless millions of people around the world, both Christians and others. The age of the Internet, it is said, is the age of the self and the selfie. The world is full of people full of themselves. In such an age, “I post, therefore I am.”

To put the point more plainly, human interconnectedness in the global era has been raised to a truly global level, with unprecedented speed and on an unprecedented scale. Everyone is now everywhere, and everyone can communicate with everyone else from anywhere and at any time, instantly and cheaply. Communication through the social media in the age of email, text messages, cell phones, tweets and Skype is no longer from “the few to the many,” as in the age of the book, the newspaper and television, but from “the many to the many” and all the time.

One of the effects of this level of globalization is plain. Active and interactive communication is the order of the day. From the shortest texts and tweets to the humblest website, to the angriest blog, to the most visited social networks, the daily communications of the wired world attest that *everyone is now in the business of relentless self-promotion – presenting themselves, explaining themselves, defending themselves, selling themselves or sharing their inner thoughts and emotions as never before in human history.* That is why it can be said that we are in the grand secular age of apologetics. The whole world has taken up apologetics without ever using or knowing the idea as Christians understand it. We are all apologists now, if only on behalf of “the Daily Me” or “the Tweeted Update” that we post for our virtual friends and our cyber community. The great goals of life, we are told, are to gain the widest possible public attention and to reach as many people in the world with our products – and always, our leading product is Us.

Are Christians ready for this new age? We who are followers of Jesus stand as witnesses to the truth and meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as a central matter of our calling. We are spokespersons for our Lord, and advocacy is in our genes. Ours is the apologetic faith par excellence. But regardless of the new media, many of us have yet to rise to the challenge of a way of apologetics that is as profound as the good news we announce, as deep as the human heart, as subtle as the human mind, as powerful and flexible as the range of people and issues that we meet every day in our extraordinary world in which “everyone is now everywhere.”

What does “the grand age of apologetics” mean for us as followers of Jesus? The full scope of this overall task is far larger than my particular concern in this book. But on the one hand,

INTERVARSITY PRESS

Visit [ivpress.com/media](http://ivpress.com/media)



**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:**

Krista Carnet, broadcast publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kkcarnet@ivpress.com](mailto:kkcarnet@ivpress.com)

Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [awissman@ivpress.com](mailto:awissman@ivpress.com)

Diana Verhagen, online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4012 or [dverhagen@ivpress.com](mailto:dverhagen@ivpress.com)

[ivpress.com/books](http://ivpress.com/books)



# BOOK EXCERPT

our age is quite simply the greatest opportunity for Christian witness since the time of Jesus and the apostles, and our response should be to seize the opportunity with bold and imaginative enterprise. If ever the “wide and effective door” that St. Paul wrote of has been reopened for the gospel, it is now.

*“Os Guinness’s books have been invaluable for the Christian church for decades. A great deal of what I know about communicating the faith in modern times I learned from him. This book does not disappoint. Unlike most books on apologetics, it addresses the actual dynamics of conversation and persuasion – as well as providing an unusually comprehensive range of accessible and useful arguments and appeals for the truth of Christianity. I highly recommend it.”*

– **Tim Keller**, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City

On the other hand, we have to face up to the many challenges of the new age of communication with realism, for there are oddities in the age of communication that make it actually harder to communicate well today, rather than easier. And we also have to face the fact that the global era has shown up weaknesses in our present approaches to sharing the faith that must be remedied – above all because many attempts at Christian apologetics have been caught in the turbulent wake of the massive crossover between the grand philosophies of modernism and postmodernism.

This book is therefore about an issue that is timely and urgent – remedying a central and serious shortcoming in Christian communication today, and about a broader vision of advocacy to help us go forward to make the most of this new moment. For those who want to explore the wider issues of apologetics, there are many excellent books available. *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, edited by William Edgar and Scott Oliphint, presents a magisterial anthology of the best of apologetics down the centuries. *A History of Apologetics* by Avery Cardinal Dulles provides a superb overview of the discipline. Among the best grand summaries of contemporary apologetic issues by Christian philosophers are the *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* by Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, and *Christian Apologetics* by Douglas Groothuis. And the *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* represents a goldmine of an encyclopedia on the topic.

This book focuses on a narrower issue and a simple problem: *We have lost the art of Christian persuasion and we must recover it.* Evangelism is alive and well in the rapidly growing churches of the Global South, where the challenge is to recover an ardor for discipleship and a discernment of the modern world to match the zeal for evangelism. But in the advanced modern world, which is both pluralistic and post-Christian, our urgent need is for the recovery of persuasion in order to address the issues of the hour. Some branches of the Western church have effectively abandoned evangelism, for various reasons, and others speak as if Christian truths and beliefs are always and readily understandable to everyone, whatever the state of their listeners’ hearts and whatever the character of their audience’s worldview and culture. Others again have come to rely on formulaic, cookie-cutter approaches to evangelism and apologetics as if all who hear them are the same.

This combination of the abandonment of evangelism, the divorce between evangelism, apologetics and discipleship, and the failure to appreciate true human diversity is deeply serious. It is probably behind the fact that many Christians, realizing the ineffectiveness of many current approaches and sensing the unpopularity and implausibility of much Christian witness, have simply fallen silent and given up evangelism altogether, sometimes



**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:**

Krista Carnet, broadcast publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kkcarnet@ivpress.com](mailto:kkcarnet@ivpress.com)  
Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [awissman@ivpress.com](mailto:awissman@ivpress.com)  
Diana Verhagen, online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4012 or [dverhagen@ivpress.com](mailto:dverhagen@ivpress.com)  
[ivpress.com/books](http://ivpress.com/books)



# BOOK EXCERPT

relieved to mask their evasion under a newfound passion for social justice that can forget the gaucheness of evangelism. At best, many of us who take the good news of Jesus seriously are eager and ready to share the good news when we meet people who are open, interested or in need of what we have to share. But we are less effective when we encounter people who are not open, not interested or not needy – in other words, people who are closed, indifferent, hostile, skeptical or apathetic, and therefore require persuasion.

*“A remarkable book. Written with the benefit of decades of experience and reflection – this is one book on apologetics you will not want to miss. I wholeheartedly recommend it.”*

– **Michael Ramsden**, joint director, Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, international director, RZIM for Europe, the Middle East and Africa

In short, many of us today lack a vital part of a way of communicating that is prominent in the Gospels and throughout the Scriptures, but largely absent in the church today – persuasion, the art of speaking to people who, for whatever reason, are indifferent or resistant to what we have to say. They simply do not agree with us and are not open to what we have to say.

Loss of persuasion? It might seem bizarre, almost unimaginable, that Christian communication has lost something so central to its mission. Yet in profound ways it has, and that is why our challenge is to think about apologetics in ways that are not only fresh but faithful and independent – faithful in the sense that they are shaped by the imperatives of Christian truths, and independent in the sense that they are not primarily beholden to ways of thinking that are alien to Christian ways of thinking. That is why this book is not only about the lost art of Christian persuasion. It is also about an “advocacy of the heart,” an existential approach to sharing our faith that I believe is deeper and more faithful as well as more effective than the common approaches used by many. Christian advocacy has had many conversation partners down the centuries – particularly the great tradition of classical rhetoric established by the Greeks and the Romans. It has also had many opponents and sparring partners – most recently the bracing challenge of the new atheists. But for all the undoubted benefits of these challenges, one of the more unfortunate side effects is that much apologetics has lost touch with evangelism and come to be all about “arguments,” and in particular about winning arguments rather than winning hearts and minds and people. Our urgent need today is to reunite evangelism and apologetics, to make sure that our best arguments are directed toward winning people and not just winning arguments, and to seek to do all this in a manner that is true to the gospel itself.

The fact is that much contemporary advocacy ignores the deeper understandings of the spiritual and philosophical ways in which people think through their faiths, change their faiths, and the impact of their cultures and their ways of life on their thinking and beliefs. Even more importantly, today’s advocacy often ignores the crucial biblical understanding of the anatomy of human unbelief, how God addresses those who ignore or reject him, and how we too are to learn to address people wherever they are and whatever they think about God or the church or us. The heart of the problem is quite literally the problem of the heart.

My own journey to faith was more than intellectual, but it included a long, slow, critical debate in my mind during my school years. On one side, I listened to the arguments of such

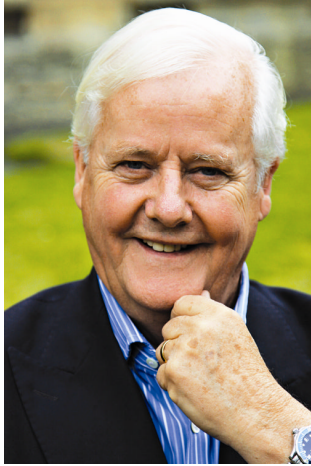


# BOOK EXCERPT

“How can we as followers of Jesus be as truly persuasive as we desire to be?”

famous atheists as Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and on the other side to such Christian thinkers as Blaise Pascal, Fyodor Dostoevsky, G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis. But if the approach advocated here is rare today, it is definitely not unique to me. I merely sit on the shoulders of certain giants of the faith who have gone before. My debts to these giants will become clear as we proceed, and I am equally clear about my own inadequacies in following their example. But together we must rise to the challenge of our time: How can we speak for our Lord in a manner that does justice to the wonder of who God is, to the profundity of the good news he has entrusted to us, to the wily stubbornness of the human heart and mind, as well as to the wide-ranging challenges of today’s world and the mind-boggling prospects of tomorrow’s? In short, how can we as followers of Jesus be as truly persuasive as we desire to be? Nothing less than that is the goal of our exploration.

— Taken from the introduction, “Recovering the Lost Art”



Os Guinness, author of  
*Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art  
of Christian Persuasion*  
Available July 2015  
\$22, 270 pages, hardcover  
978-0-8308-3699-4

## Social Critic, Influential Speaker, Writer

Os Guinness (DPhil, Oxford) is a prolific writer and social critic. He is the author or editor of more than thirty books, including *The American Hour*, *Time for Truth*, *The Call*, *A Free People's Suicide*, *The Global Public Square*, *Renaissance* and *The Case for Civility*. Previously, Guinness was a freelance reporter with the BBC, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution and a guest scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies.

From 1986 to 1989, Guinness served as executive director of the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, a bicentennial celebration of the First Amendment. In this position he helped to draft the Williamsburg Charter, which was signed by former presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, Chief Justices William Rehnquist and Warren Burger, Coretta Scott King, Elie Wiesel, several members of Congress and many others.

A prominent social critic, Guinness is the founder of the Trinity Forum and was senior fellow there until 2004, conducting seminars for leaders around the world and publishing seven major curricula. He has been a frequent speaker and seminar leader at political and business conferences in both Europe and the United States, and has addressed audiences from the British House of Commons to the United States Congress. He has also been the subject of numerous media interviews, appearing on programs such as C-SPAN's *Booknotes*. His countless addresses at leading universities worldwide have helped to influence an entire generation of thinkers.

Guinness lives with his wife, Jenny, near Washington, D.C.

[www.osguinness.com](http://www.osguinness.com)