



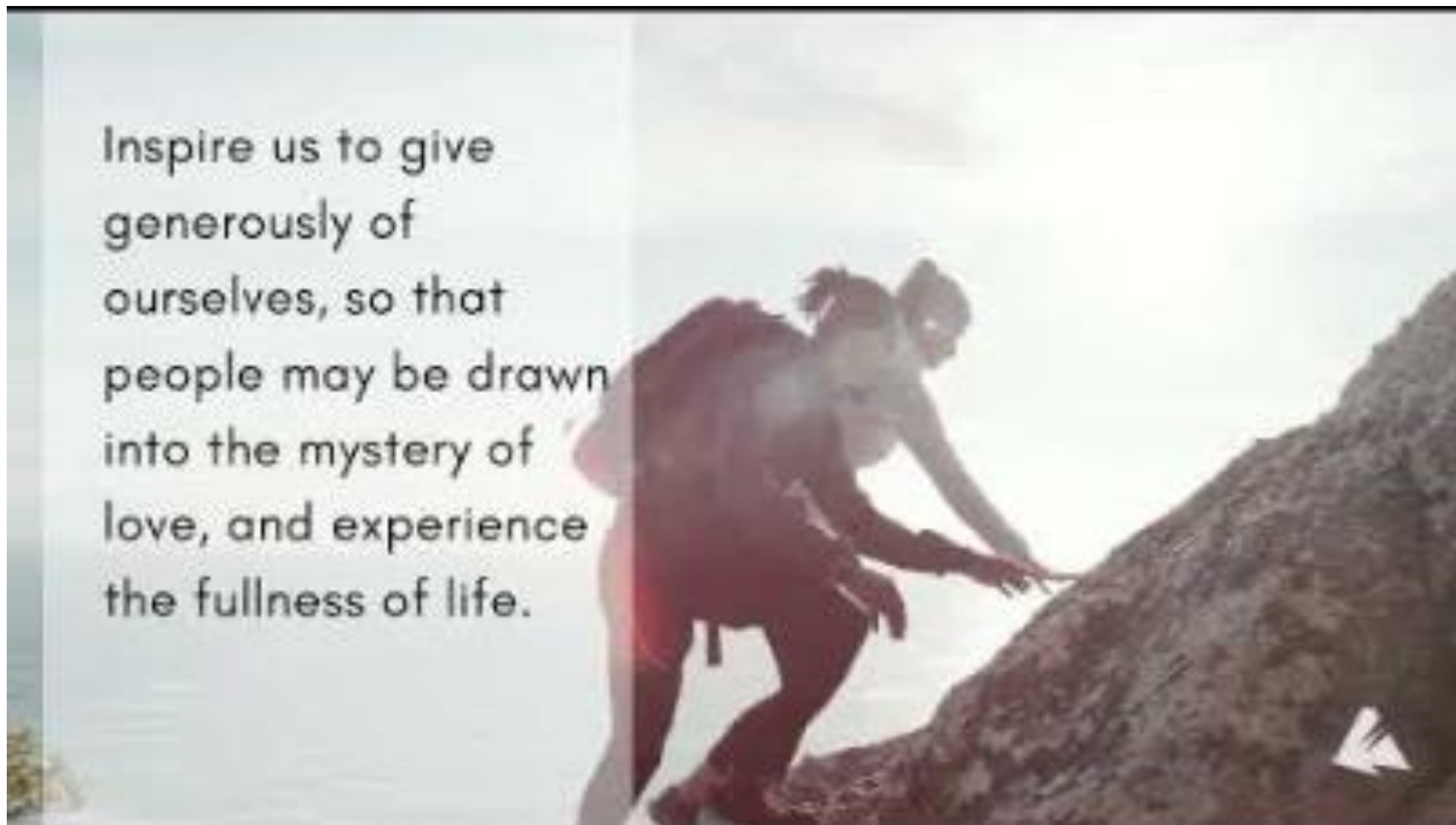
CENTRE FOR MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP

A work of the Missionaries of God's Love

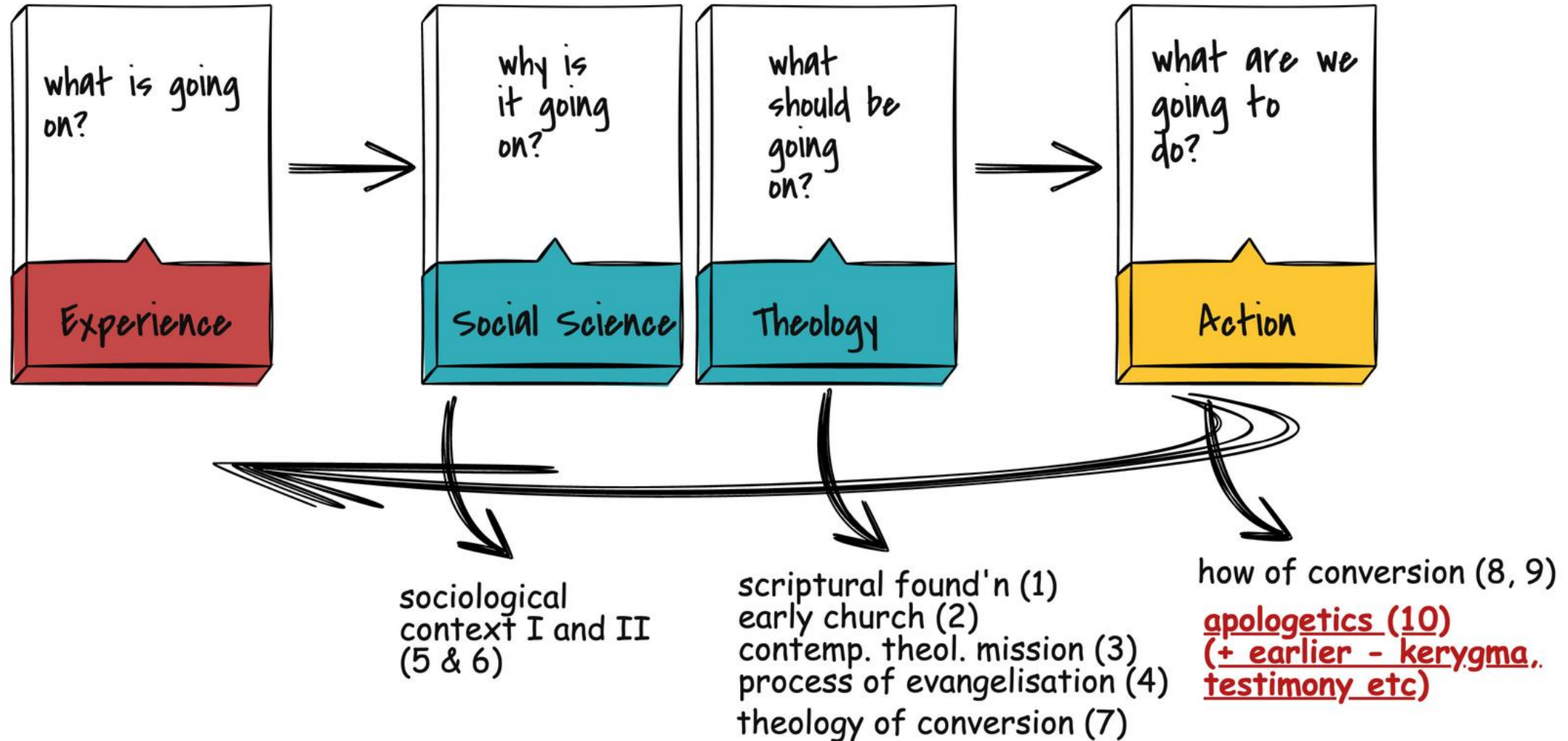
The Role of Apologetics in Conversion

Theological Foundations of Mission 10

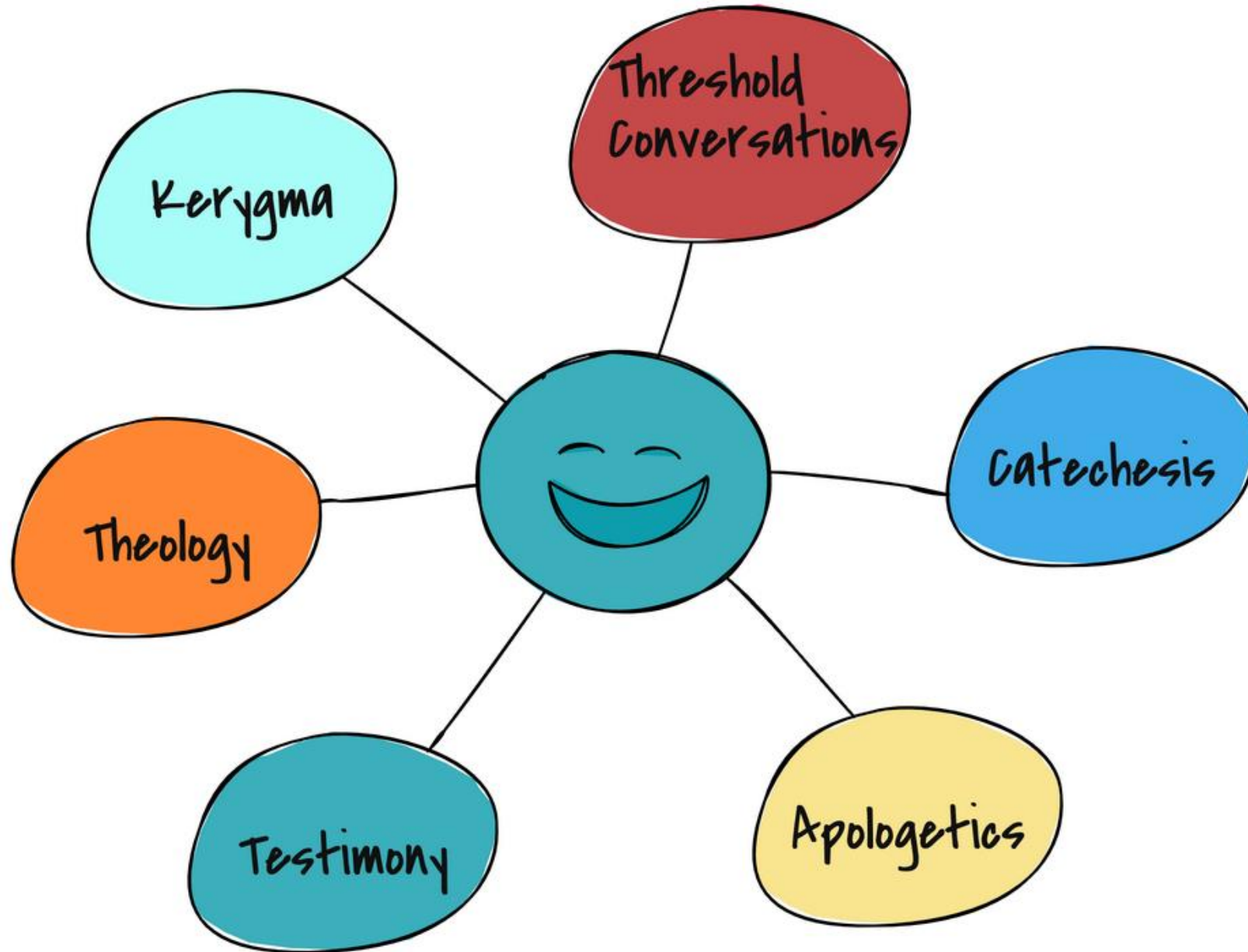
Inspire us to give
generously of
ourselves, so that
people may be drawn
into the mystery of
love, and experience
the fullness of life.



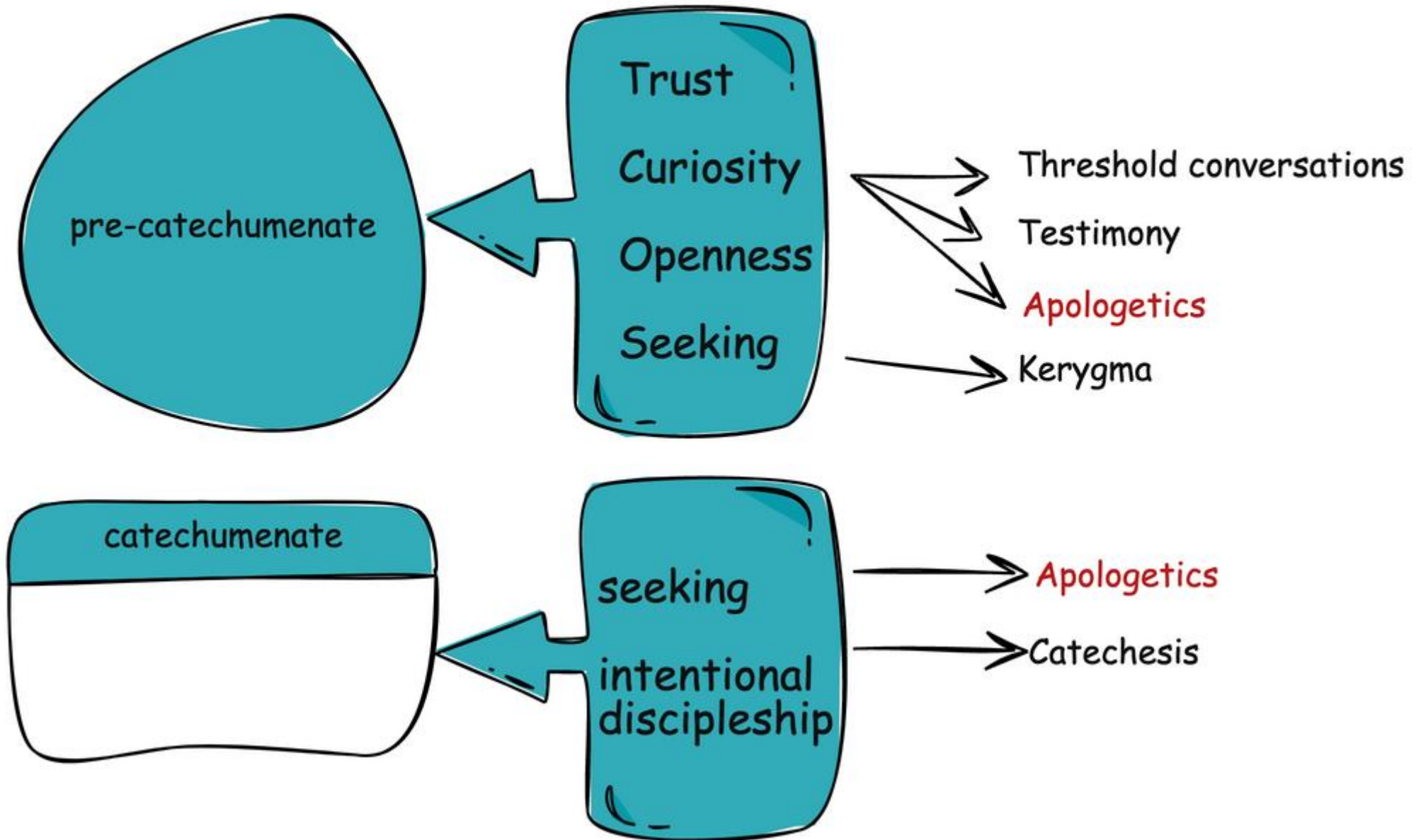
Practical Theological Method



Different kinds of "God-conversations"



Which Conversation When?



Defining the Conversations

- Threshold Conversations
- Testimony
- Kerygma
- Apologetics
- Catechesis



In this Lecture:

- What is apologetics?
- The relationship between the kerygma and apologetics
- How might we approach apologetics? Pascal
- Apologetics and the thresholds
- Making faith reasonable
- Making it attractive



What is Apologetics?

- “Apologein” = to tell fully, narrate
- An “apologia” – defense of the faith (defense speech in the courtroom)
- 1 Pet 3:15 – always have a reason for the hope that you have, but give it with courtesy, respect and a clear conscience



A Foundational Conviction

“The desire for God is written in the human heart,
because the man [sic] is created by God and for God; and God never
ceases to draw man [sic] to himself.

Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops
searching for.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church 27



Why Don't People Believe?

The intimate and vital bond between the human person and God can be “forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected” (CCC 28)

This may be due to:

- Revolt against evil in the world
- Religious ignorance or indifference
- Cares and riches of the world
- Scandal of bad example on the part of believers
- Currents of thought hostile to religion
- Attitude of sinful person which makes one hide from God out of fear and flee his call



Summed up ...

“Unbelief arises from a fault of the heart, not of the intellect”

St John Henry Newman

“Most apologetics tries to feed spinach to a reluctant baby who stubbornly closes his mouth ... What you have to do is make the baby hungry”

Blaise Pascal



A Method from Blaise Pascal

Men [sic] despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect.

Next make it attractive, make good men [sic] wish it were true, and then show that it is.

Worthy of reverence because it really understands human nature.

Attractive because it promises true good.

Pensee 12



Apologetics at the Thresholds: Curiosity

- Not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect
- Make it attractive, make good [people] wish it were true



Not Contrary to Reason

- It's dumb to believe in God (science has disproved or superseded religion)
- Religion is dangerous – violent
- Anti-woman
- Anti-diversity
- The problem of evil and suffering
- We don't need God to be good
- God doesn't exist



On the Existence of God

- Creation and the origins of the universe – the Creator God and the Big Bang
- Fine-tuned for Life – initial and constant conditions for intelligent life
- Science is predicated upon the intelligibility of the world (which is a function of belief in God as creator)
- Argument from desire: “If I find in my self a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I am made for another world” (C.S. Lewis)
- Argument from Beauty
- Argument from Religious Experience



Make it [faith] attractive

- The power of God's love
- What it means to be a son or daughter of God
- That it provides the most coherent response to the problem of suffering
- True Freedom
- Happiness and Joy
- Forgiveness is possible (or the beauty of Jesus' moral teaching)
- The ultimate peace and perfection are possible
- A new heavens and a new earth



Another Approach – N.T. Wright *Simply Christian*

- Quest for Spirituality
 - Longing for Justice
 - Hunger for Relationships
 - Delight in Beauty
-
- Why do we have these feelings and desires?
 - Alternative possibilities ...?
 - Christian story as the best account of human experience



Leading to the belief that it would
be great if it were true



Apologetics at the Thresholds: Seeking

- And then show that it is true
- Questions like:
 - Is Jesus the Son of God?
 - Did Jesus rise from the dead?
 - Which Church?
- Leads into the kerygma

