

Chapter 3 MINISTRIES

Ministering to women in matters of Christian marriage, apologetics, and faith

A Logic Primer

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List of Logical Fallacies with Examples

Fallacy, logic: “any of various types of erroneous reasoning that render arguments logically unsound.”

It is quite common to come across logical fallacies while doing the work of [apologetics](#). Faulty reasoning is often employed in attacks against Christianity or in the defense of false teachings. Faulty reasoning can also exist in individuals who are open to talking about God, but have not yet believed. Sometimes, even fellow believers who have embraced false teachings need to be gently led out of errors in logic. Defending our hope in Christ presents no shortage of opportunities to present biblical truth *and* hopefully help others see and move away from unsound reasoning. Let’s be equipped in every way possible to serve God and be ready. ([1 Peter 3:15](#))

To that end, below is a list of logical fallacies to study. It should provide a good starting point for becoming familiar with them. Practice spotting them. An easy way to do that is to listen to political or cultural debates online or on TV. It probably will not take you very long to hear logically unsound arguments. (See Also: [How To Spot Logical Fallacies](#) on [chapter3min.org](#))

I recommend revisiting the list below every now and then as a refresher and checking out other lists as well. You can find other lists that contain these and other types of fallacies by searching online. Though you might desire to learn about logical fallacies to be better prepared to communicate clearly and reasonably with others, you might also discover that studying fallacies is fun. Some logical fallacies can be quite amusing! I pray you enjoy the work.

“And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’” [Matthew 22:37 \(ESV\)](#)

Logical Fallacies

1. **Ad Hominem (To the Man)**: This occurs when someone attacks a person instead of responding to the argument. It is common in political discussions.

Example:

News Show Guest: Donald Trump actually said that his tax plan will help this country. That’s ridiculous! He’s a misogynist and a racist. He will ruin our country.

2. **Ad Populum (Appeal to the Masses)**: Arguing for a position based on it being held by a majority.

Example:

You’ve got to get a copy of *Jesus Calling*. It’s the number one bestselling daily devotional and has sold millions of copies, so it’s got to be a great book for Christians to read!

Popularity is not the correct way to determine the value of this book (or any book) for Christians. Instead, one should use the Bible and discernment to assess its content. As further help, there have been book reviews done that demonstrate that despite its popularity, *Jesus Calling* is not a great book for Christians to read. A quick search online will yield some reviews.

3. **Appeal to Novelty**: Stating that something is better or true simply because it is new.

Example:

The Message Bible is a great Bible because it is a modern version.

The Message is a modern version, but that alone does not make it good. What makes a good Bible is how faithful it is to the original languages and how readable it is. The Message Bible has some serious problems with accuracy. Please see [A Creative But Inaccurate Message](#) for information.

4. **Appeal to Tradition**: Stating that something is better or true because it has always been done or believed.

Example:

For generations, every man in our family has been a farmer. It is the right career path for you too, my son.

5. **Apriorism (Hasty Generalization)**: Making a generalization about a collective that is made too fast from too small a sample.

Example:

I've met two feminists who were both so angry, loud, and impossible to talk to. So now I know.
Feminists are crazy!

6. **Composition:** Presuming that what is true for some or all the parts of a whole is true for the whole.

Example:

I do not eat table salt! It is made up of two poisons: sodium and chlorine! Therefore, table salt has got to be poisonous.

7. **Division:** Presuming that what is true of the whole must be true of some or all of the parts.

Example:

Baking powder is in this chocolate cake recipe.
Chocolate cake is delicious.
Baking powder must be delicious.

8. **Fallacy of Equivocation:** When a term/phrase with different meanings is used in various parts of the same argument without clarifying a switch in meaning.

Example:

Hits are something all recording artist want. Therefore, we should all line up and hit them hard!

9. **False Dilemma (Either/Or, False Dichotomy):** Stating that there are only two options when there are one or more other options.

Example:

That woman is a submissive wife. She is either weak-minded or being bullied into it by her husband.

There could be other reasons like culture or faith. In this case, she is a submissive wife because she is a Christian and is obeying the Bible.

10. **Genetic Fallacy (Fallacy of Origins):** Accepting or rejecting a claim based on its origin.

Example:

You're a man! Your opinions about the wage gap between women and men are wrong.

11. **Petitio Principii (Begging the Question, Circular Reasoning):** This fallacy occurs when an argument contains an assumption that something is true and it is the same thing the argument is trying to prove is true.

Example:

Pizza is better than salad because salad is not as good as pizza.

12. **Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc (False Cause):** The fallacy assumes that since x happened after y, y was the cause of x.

Example:

I got in a bad argument with my boss after I took the train to work instead of driving in. To avoid future arguments with him, I will not be taking the train to work anymore.

13. **Red Herring:** Introducing a new topic or bringing up an argument or point that is unrelated or irrelevant to the one being discussed as a means of avoidance or distraction.

Example:

Jill: Women shouldn't teach to a mixed church audience of men and women. That would go against what the Bible says.

Beth: What? I think women are just as smart as men and just as spiritual. Maybe more.

Jill: You think women are more spiritual than men? I think we should take it case by case.

Beth: Think about Mae and John. Who is more spiritual?

14. **Special Pleading:** Applying a standard or rule to others, but exempting yourself without good cause.

Example:

Yes, everyone who cheats on tests should get detention; but not me. I'm the captain of our football team.

15. **Straw Man:** An argument that does not represent the opponent's view correctly. The altered view is attacked and "knocked down easily".

Example:

Gender roles in marriage should be rejected because complementarians believe men are superior to women.

How to Spot Logical Fallacies

Logical fallacies are committed all too often. They can come up in personal conversations, in conversations at work, in news reports, and online in political or cultural discussions. We need to be able to spot these errors in logic. This can help protect us from accepting falsehoods as truths. This is most important in discussions about our faith. When we communicate with others about God and the Bible, we need to be able to recognize faulty reasoning; and conversely, we need to make sure we are not guilty of it.

Here are some suggestions to help you spot logical fallacies.

1. *Pray for discernment and to be able to listen patiently and think clearly.*
2. *Spend time studying various types of fallacies.* You can find [a list of fallacies with examples](#) on [chapter3min.org](#). Searching online will yield other lists with more examples to review. The more familiar you become with the different types of fallacies, the easier it will be to spot them.
3. *Keep the fallacies you have learned about in mind.* Be ready. Stay alert. As you interact with others in real life or online, realize that they are bound to come up. It is wise to expect them and look for them.
4. *Practice looking for them by listening to debates online or on television.* This is a good way to practice because you are not “in” the conversation. You can observe without the emotional investment or the stress that sometimes comes with these types of exchanges. If it is an online video or recorded TV that you can pause and rewind, you can replay the exchange to analyze it carefully.
5. *If you do spot a fallacy in a debate you are reviewing, take time to think through it.* Work to fully understand what is wrong with the reasoning. This will help you to spot similar errors in the future.
6. *If possible, practice with someone one on one.* Each of you could choose a different side of a topic and debate it. Alter how reasonable you are in making your points and which fallacies are made.
7. *When you are “in” the conversation for real, do not assume that the other person is correct or wrong.* Try to listen objectively and calmly.
8. *Engage your mind, paying careful attention to what is trying to be communicated or proved.*
9. *Try to determine how they are trying to make their case.* In what way is their argument being supported?
10. *Always keep an eye out for red herrings.* Have they left the topic or argument all together and switched to something else? If they have, don't follow. Attempt to circle back.

The goal of spotting fallacies when we are in discussions about our faith is to communicate better and possibly help others come out of error. The goal is not simply to point them out or get an advantage to win an argument. The point is to encourage sound thinking as we lovingly share the word of God and the Christian faith to the glory of God. Remember always, it is God who gives eyes to see.

The Three Laws of Thought

“Logic is the process of proper inference. It is the system of thinking properly—of arriving at proper conclusions. It is the process of proper thinking based upon principles that govern the validity of arguments.” [What is logic?](#) CARM

“**Law of thought:** any of the three basic laws of traditional logic: the law of contradiction, the law of excluded middle, and the law of identity.” [Dictionary.com](#)

“These three laws are thought to have originated with Aristotle, who believed that the laws are necessary conditions for rational thinking to occur. The three laws are the law of identity, law of non-contradiction, and law of the excluded middle.” [The Three Laws of Logic](#), Study.com

Keeping the following three laws in mind will be of great help in your apologetics work or during any evaluation or formulation of reason.

The Law of Excluded Middle: Statements are either false or true. There is nothing in between or other option. The statement “The lamp is on” is either false or true. The lamp cannot be sort of on. (No dimmers here)

The Law of Identity: A is A. Things are what they are. A statement that is true is true. If the statement “The lamp is on” is true, then it is true.

The Law of Non-contradiction: A statement cannot be false and true in the same way. If the statement “The lamp is on” is true then it cannot also be false at the same time. The lamp must not be off.

Sound reasoning is indispensable in the life of the believer and by extension in the work of apologetics. God gave us a mind that can reason logically for a good purpose. We can use logical thoughts to defend Him and His word. There are a lot of beliefs and teachings that differ from Christianity. When we speak about these things with others, contradictions come up. Gently pointing out contradictions in a loving way, offering any relevant biblical testimony, and stating that two opposing ideas cannot both be true, sometimes helps to bring people to a place where they can begin to see that something is amiss. This is an important work in apologetics.

In and of itself, logic is important; but it does not save. That belongs to God. But with the His help, we can try to shed light on faulty reasoning and erroneous beliefs to His glory. We can pray that by His grace and the work of the Holy Spirit, the unbelieving come out of darkness.

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