

# ***How do you know God exists?***

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

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**Pages 1-11: Understanding the Evidence and Strategy for Answering**  
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## **PAGES 1-11: UNDERSTANDING THE EVIDENCE AND STRATEGY FOR ANSWERING**

### **1. IDENTIFY AND CLARIFY THE ORIGINS OF THE QUESTION**

- a. Existential (Heart)
  - We don't want a God to whom we're responsible;
  - If there's a God, that changes everything!
- b. Presuppositions (Worldview, Plausibility Structures)
  - Anti-supernaturalism;
  - People believe in God because of culture, wish fulfilment, power games, etc.;
  - Religion causes too much trouble, is the root of conflicts;
  - Religious people are irrational;
  - Can't believe anything unless you can prove it.
- c. Evidence (Mind)
  - There are no proofs for God's existence.

### **2. EMPATHISE WITH THE QUESTIONER, THE QUESTION, THE OBJECTION**

- a. Find common ground and empathise with their question – "I too wish that ...!"
- b. Show the Bible also contains their question (as it often does)!
- c. Agree that a personal, loving, relational, interventionist God is not a small thing to believe in
  - If there is a God, this changes everything. It would be like finding out the earth was round (when you thought it was flat), or finding out you had another brother, etc.
  - It may also mean that I may now be held accountable for the way I live.
  - The history of Western thought makes it clear that one fundamental motivation for atheism is the fear of accountability and retribution in the sight of God.<sup>1</sup>
  - Whilst it is a big thing, it is important to raise that you cannot keep running away from a God only for that reason.

### **3. DISMANTLE THEIR PRESUPPOSITIONS**

- a. Show that it works against their position as well – i.e., their question is a 2-edged sword.
- b. Show that their position is as much a faith-based position as yours (Tim Keller).
- c. Show that their position is largely a product of their culture (Western) (Tim Keller).

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<sup>1</sup> Alister McGrath, 'Challenges from Atheism', in R. Zacharias (ed.), *Beyond Opinion. Living The Faith We Defend* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson: 2007) 31

**Presupposition 1: “There is no such thing as the supernatural – all that exists is what we can see/touch”**

**Response 1**

But there are so many things that we believe in that you can't see or touch:

- Right and wrong;
- Beauty;
- Joy;
- Freedom;
- Equality.

Can 'joy' really be reduced to chemical molecules?

Can 'beauty' really be reduced to atoms?

Can 'right and wrong' really only be a social agreement?

If we were true to our commitment to naturalism, we would have to give up on all the things in the above list.

It's thinkable *but not liveable*.

*You can't have it both ways:*

- Live a life consistent with morals, beauty and joy;
- AND then insist that all that there is to life is atoms and molecules.

Besides, postmodernism has raised a new challenge to atheism within the West that atheist writers have been slow to recognise and reluctant to engage.

First, Postmodernism is intensely suspicious of worldviews that claim to offer a total view of reality. Christian apologists have realised this. Atheism offers precisely the kind of metanarrative, or big picture, that postmodern thinkers believe leads to intolerance and oppression. Its uncompromising and definitive denial of God today sounds arrogant and repressive rather than as principled and moral.

Second, Postmodernism regards purely materialist approaches to reality as inadequate and has a genuine interest in recovering a spiritual dimension to life (without necessary connection with organised religion of any kind, let alone Christianity). The postmodern fascination with spirituality is much more troubling for atheism than for Christianity. For the Christian, the problem is how to relate or convert an interest in spirituality to Jesus Christ. For the atheist, it represents a quasi-superstitious reintroduction of spiritual ideas, leading post modernity backward into religious beliefs that atheism thought it had exorcised.

Atheism has been reluctant to engage with these developments, tending to dismiss them as irrational and superstitious (Richard Dawkins).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> McGrath, 'Challenges from Atheism', 37-38

**Presupposition 2: “People believe in a God because of:**  
- **wish fulfilment (Freud); and/or**  
- **their culture (sociologists); and/or**  
- **power games (deconstructionists); and/or**  
- **evolutionary survival mechanism,**  
**not because of a God who actually exists.”**

### **Response**

Yes people do do this, but this statement itself can be guilty of exactly the same thing.

There might be even more reasons to not want a God to exist, than there are for wanting God to exist.

And right now, we do live in a culture where the ‘default’ mode is not to believe in God.  
So today, one who doesn’t believe in God might be more a product of his/her culture than the Christian.

*You can’t have it both ways:*

- To accuse others of “believing what they want to believe” (as a result of cultural pressure, wish fulfilment etc., rather than looking through the evidence clearly);
- AND then not realise that we might be doing exactly the same thing.

### **Presupposition 3: “Religion causes too much trouble/conflict”**

“Fundamentalists” who believe in God cause wars, terrorism, etc.

### **Response**

Yes, violence done in the name of Christianity (or any religion) *is a terrible reality* and must be both addressed and redressed.

But the statement that religion leads to violence is *too simplistic*. Interestingly, non-religious and atheists are just as guilty.

Some of the greatest atrocities of the twentieth century were committed by regimes that espoused atheism (for example, Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung, Pol Pot, etc.), *often with a fanaticism that some naïve Western atheists seem to think is reserved only for religious people.*<sup>3</sup>

*So the common factor isn’t religion, but just being human!*

- There is some deeply troubling flaw in human nature itself. The real problem is extremism, whether religious, antireligious, or political. All ideals – divine, transcendent, human, or invented – are capable of being abused.
- Belief in God can be and has been abused. *But abuse of an ideal does not negate its validity.*<sup>4</sup>
- The universality of violence means we cannot pin the problem on religion. The problem is within us.<sup>5</sup>

So it’s not like secular humanism is going to have the answers to this.

Christian activists such as William Wilberforce devoted their lives in the name of Christ to ending slavery. Many church leaders defended the institution. The battle for self-correction was titanic. Christianity’s self-correcting

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<sup>3</sup> McGrath, ‘Challenges from Atheism’, 30

<sup>4</sup> McGrath, ‘Challenges from Atheism’, 31

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God. Conversations on Faith and Life. Discussion Guide* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010) 71

apparatus, its critique of religiously supported acts of injustice, had asserted itself.<sup>6</sup>

When Martin Luther King confronted racism in the white church in the South, he did not tell them to become more secular

- He called on the people to listen to what the Bible had to say.
- *The answer wasn't to stop believing in God, but it was to act properly towards this God.*

The typical criticism by secular people about the oppressiveness and injustices of the Christian church actually come from Christianity's own resources for critique of itself.

Maybe we need a supernatural solution to violence, rather than a natural solution.

For example, Jesus died on a cross for us.

*You can't have it both ways:*

- Speak out against warfare, violence, terrorism, etc.;
- BUT not see that humanity is bent towards evil and that we need an extra-human solution.

Often the Christian church is charged as being judgmental and full of hypocrites.

- It is true that this is sometimes the case.
- Sometimes this is because of a well-intentioned misunderstanding or misapplication of the Bible.
- Sometimes it is because Christians are sinners and are indeed judgmental and fail to live up to their standards.
- Sometimes it is through pure thoughtlessness.

We need to acknowledge that there are people (hypocrites) in the church that are inconsistent in what they say and what they do, just like there are everywhere else. But then, there aren't many people whose lives really match their rhetoric. None of us is as kind or patient or generous as we know we should be, or as we want to be. The Christian church is one of the few organisations in the world that requires a public acknowledgement of sin as a condition for membership. In one sense the church has fewer hypocrites than any institution because by definition the church is a haven of sinners.<sup>7</sup> The mistaken belief that a person must 'clean up' his or her own life in order to merit God's presence is not Christianity. Only people who do not routinely repent can be thoroughgoing hypocrites.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Presupposition 4: "You can't believe in anything (e.g., God) unless you can prove it"**

##### ***Response***<sup>9</sup>

All atheist philosophers concede that the *nonexistence of God cannot be proved*. One atheist philosopher, Kai Nielsen, made this point with perfect clarity: "All the proofs of God's existence may fail, but it still may be the case that God exists." Thus, atheism is as much a belief system as Christianity. *The question is then, which belief system is better?*<sup>10</sup>

Besides, there is so much that we believe that we can't prove.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God. Belief in an age of scepticism* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2009) 63

<sup>7</sup> Keller, *Discussion Guide*, 68-69

<sup>8</sup> Keller, *Discussion Guide*, 74

<sup>9</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 118-119 notes that the philosophical indefensibility of 'strong rationalism' is the reason that the books by Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett have been getting such surprisingly rough treatment in scholarly journals.

Keller, *Reason For God*, 121 notes that even Dawkins admits that Darwin's theory cannot be finally proven, that new facts may come to light which will force our successors to abandon Darwinism or modify it.

Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1988) 24

<sup>10</sup> McGrath, 'Challenges from Atheism', 36

In fact, if you are honest, you will acknowledge that most of life is based on:

1. Believing what someone else says. Consider the following that you know because you have been told by someone else:
  - a. You have a brain in your head;
  - b. Your parents are your parents;
  - c. Today is Wednesday;
  - d. There will be an exam in November.

*God also speaks to us, and asks us to believe him based on what he says.*

2. ‘Critical rationality’ or ‘argument to best explanation’.

In science theories are tested and some are found far more empirically verified than others. A theory is considered empirically verified if it organises the evidence and explains phenomena better than an alternative theory. It is then accepted as better explanation, though not (in the strong rationalist sense) ‘proved’.<sup>11</sup>

Belief in God can be tested and justified (but not proven) in the same way. No view of God can be proven, but that does not mean that we cannot sift and weigh the grounds for various religious beliefs and find that some or even one is the most reasonable.<sup>12</sup>

*You can’t have it both ways:*

- Say that you have to prove everything;
- AND then live life based largely on trust and testimony of others.

#### **4. DISCUSS THE EVIDENCE**

##### ***Proofs of God’s Existence – the History of the Debate, and Changes in Burden of Proof***

It used to be that you had to prove that God existed. This was based on a positivism worldview where beliefs needed to be verifiable.

But positivism is now out of vogue, because it is:

- self-refuting
- too narrow (most of what we believe can’t be verified or proved)

So philosophically it is now acknowledged that it is unfair to require a theist to prove that there is a God.

Who therefore needs to hold the burden of proof?:

That is, which point of view should we begin the question of ‘the existence of God’

- atheistic → require the theist to falsify atheism and prove there is a God
- theistic → require the atheist to falsify theism and prove there is NO God

To provide a ‘water tight’ proof that there is a God is difficult. To provide a ‘water tight’ proof that there is NO God is even more difficult; especially in the context that if God is a unique being how do we know how hidden/unhidden he should be?

##### **‘Proofs’ for God’s Existence**

<sup>11</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 121

<sup>12</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 121

Although there are no irrefutable proofs for the existence of God, many people have found strong clues for his reality – ‘divine fingerprints’ – in many places. Because all of the following arguments are based on facts about the creation that are indeed true facts, we may say that all of these ‘proofs’ are, in an objective sense, valid ‘proofs’. But in another sense, if ‘valid’ means ‘able to compel agreement even from those who begin with false assumptions’, then of course none of the ‘proofs’ is valid because not one of them is able to compel agreement from everyone who considers them. Yet this is because many unbelievers either begin with invalid assumptions or do not reason correctly from the evidence. It is not because the ‘proofs’ are invalid in themselves.

## **1. Arguments from creation (cosmological argument)**

This argument is based on the law of causality, which says that every limited thing is caused by something other than itself. Therefore, since there is a universe and it is limited in that it had a beginning, its beginning must have been caused by something beyond itself, and this cause was God. To avoid such a conclusion, some people say that the universe is eternal and never had a beginning. But the consensus of the scientists studying the origin of the universe is that it came into being in a sudden and cataclysmic way, called the Big Bang theory. There are three evidences for the universe having a beginning. First, the second law of thermodynamics says the universe is running out of usable energy. But if it is running down, then it could not be eternal. So it must have had a beginning. Second evidence is that we can still find the radiation from the Big Bang. The universe itself has low-level radiation from some past catastrophe that looks like a giant fireball. No explanation other than the Big Bang has been found for the fireball radiation. Third, scientists argue that the universe is not simply in a holding pattern, maintaining its movement from everlasting to everlasting. It is expanding. It now appears that all of the galaxies are moving outward as if from a central point of origin.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. Arguments from design (teleological argument)**

This argument focuses on the evidence of harmony, order, and design in the universe, and argues that its design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose (the Greek word *telos* means ‘end’ or ‘goal’ or ‘purpose’). Anytime we see a complex design, we know by experience that it came from the mind of a designer. Watches imply a watchmaker; buildings imply an architect; paintings imply an artist. The design we see in the universe is complex. The universe is a very intricate system of forces that work together for the mutual benefit of the whole. Life is a very complex development. A single DNA molecule, the building block of all life, carries the same amount of information as one volume of an encyclopaedia. So when we find a living creature composed of millions of DNA-based cells, we ought to assume that it likewise has an intelligent cause. One scientist figured that the odds for a one-cell animal to emerge by pure chance at 1 in  $10^{40,000}$ . The odds for an infinitely more complex human being to emerge by chance are too high to calculate. The only reasonable conclusion is that there is a great Designer behind the design of the world.<sup>15</sup> This is demonstrated in several ways including:

- a. *‘The narrow range for life’*: For organic life to exist, the fundamental regularities and constants of physics – the speed of light, the gravitational constant, the strength of the weak and strong nuclear forces – must all have values that together fall into an extremely narrow range. The probability of this perfect calibration happening by chance is so tiny as to be statistically negligible. Thus the universe was prepared for human beings.<sup>16</sup>
- b. *The Regularity of Nature*: There is something about nature that is more striking and inexplicable than its design. All scientific, inductive reasoning is based on the assumption of the regularity (the ‘laws’) of nature, that water will boil tomorrow under the same identical conditions of

<sup>13</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An introduction to Biblical doctrine* (Nottingham, IVP, 2007) 144

<sup>14</sup> Norman L. Geisler, Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask. A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2008) 15-16, 220-221; see also William L. Craig, ‘Richard Dawkins on Arguments for God in William’, Lane Craig & Chad Meister (eds.), *God is Great, God is Good: Why belief in God is reasonable and responsible* (Downers Grove, IVP: 2009) 13 – 31 for a response to Richard Dawkins’ refutations of arguments for God’s existence.

<sup>15</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 20-22

<sup>16</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 130

today. The method of induction requires generalising from observed cases to all cases of the same kind. Without inductive reasoning we couldn't learn from experience, we couldn't rely on our memories. Science cannot prove the continued regularity of nature, it can only take it on *faith*. Many scholars have argued that modern science arose in its most sustained form out of Christian civilisation because of its belief in an all-powerful, personal God who created and sustains an orderly universe.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Arguments from beauty**

If we are the product of the meaningless, accidental forces of nature, how do we account for the sense we have that *beauty matters, that love and life are significant*? Even those who view beauty and love as just biochemical responses sense that in the presence of great art and beauty they inescapably feel that there is real meaning in life. What is evoked in these experiences is appetite or desire. Goethe refers to this as blessed longing. We not only feel the reality but also the absence of what we long for. We have a longing for joy, love and beauty that no amount or quality of food, sex, friendship or success can satisfy. We want something that nothing in this world can fulfil. This unfulfillable longing, then qualifies as a deep, innate human desire, and that makes it a major clue that God is there.<sup>18</sup>

### **4. Arguments from moral law (axiological argument)**

This argument can be stated this way: 1.) All men are conscious of an objective moral law; 2.) Moral laws imply a moral lawgiver; 3.) Therefore, there must be a supreme moral Lawgiver.<sup>19</sup> We all have a pervasive, powerful and unavoidable belief not only in moral values but also in moral obligation. We all believe that there are people in the world who are doing things we believe are wrong, and they should stop doing them regardless of their individual convictions and regardless of what the rest of the community and culture says. We believe there are standards that exist apart from us. Though we have been taught that all moral values are relative to individuals and cultures, we can't live like that. In actual practice we inevitably treat some principles as absolute standards by which we judge the behaviour of others.

Even people who laugh at the claim that there is a transcendent moral order do not think that racial genocide, rape or theft are just impractical or self-defeating, but that they are wrong. If there is no objective moral law, then there can be no right or wrong value judgments. If there is no God, then there is no way to say any one action is 'moral' and another 'immoral'.

### ***Inference to Best Explanation***

In the same way we believe in Global Warming, we can believe in God's Existence. Both explain best the observed 'evidence'.

### ***'Pragmatic Evidence' that God exists***

Practically, it seems that we humans find it very difficult to live in a universe where there is no God.

- If we don't believe in a God, it's very hard to explain:
  - Equality of humans;
  - What is wrong with this world;

<sup>17</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 142

<sup>18</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 134-35

<sup>19</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 22

<sup>20</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 146-47

- Why we should not be violent;
  - Why freedom is important;
  - What makes something right or wrong;
  - Why we can call something 'evil';
  - Why I shouldn't be selfish;
  - Beauty, love, joy;
  - Meaning, purpose;
  - Why we are so relational.
- In the end, we all have to live for someone ...
    - live for yourself → but how is this not downright selfishness? (This is seen when someone else is impatient and rude).
    - live for someone else → tribalism
    - live for our Creator
  - Have you noticed we can never escape the language of Providence?
    - Mother Nature;
    - The selfish gene;
    - Blessed;
    - Thankful.

Peter Fitzsimmons wrote in an email that "Providence" had been kind to him. After 9-11, Nancy Gibbs wrote that we should be "thankful" on Thanksgiving. But this only makes sense if there's someone to thank.

## **5. LEAD TO THE GOSPEL AND BIBLICAL EXPLANATION**

### **1. Wayne Grudem's approach: How do we know God exists?<sup>21</sup>**

First, all people have an inner sense that God exists. Paul says that even Gentile unbelievers "knew God" but did not honour him as God or give thanks to him (Rom 1:21). He says that unbelievers have "exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (Rom 1:25), implying that they actively or wilfully rejected some truth about God's existence and character that they knew. Paul says that "what can be known about God is plain to them", and adds that this is "because God has shown it to them" (Rom 1:19). Yet Scripture also recognizes that some people deny this inner sense of God and even deny that God exists. It is "the fool" who says in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps 14:1; 53:1). Paul also recognises that sin will cause people to deny their knowledge of God. He speaks of those who "by their wickedness suppress the truth" (Rom 1:18) and says that those who do this are "without excuse" for this denial of God (Rom 1:20).

Nevertheless, it is man himself, created in the image of God, who most abundantly bears witness to the existence of God: considering human beings, we should realise that such an incredible intricate, skilful, communicative living creature could only have been created by an infinite, all-wise Creator.

Therefore, when we believe that God exists, we are basing our belief not on some blind hope apart from any evidence, but on an overwhelming amount of reliable evidence from God's words and God's works.

### **2. Paul Little: God has penetrated the finite<sup>22</sup>**

One of the popularisers of agnosticism of a century ago observed accurately that a bird has never been known to fly out of space. Therefore he concluded by analogy that it is impossible for the finite to penetrate the infinite.

<sup>21</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 141-143

<sup>22</sup> Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 34-35



His observation was correct, but his conclusion was wrong. He missed one other possibility: that the infinite could penetrate the finite. This, of course, is what God did.

As the writer of Hebrews puts it, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Heb 1:1-2). God has taken the initiative, throughout history, to communicate to man. His fullest revelation has been His invasion into human history in the person of Jesus Christ. Here, in terms of human personality that we can understand, He has lived among us. If you wanted to communicate to a colony of ants, how could you most effectively do it? Clearly, it would be best to become an ant. Only in this way could your existence and what you were like be communicated fully and effectively. This is what God did with us. The best and clearest answer to how we know there is a God is that He has visited us. The other indications are merely clues or hints. What confirms them conclusively is the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## **6. SOME SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS**

How do you know there's a God?

This is a big question, because if there's a God, everything changes!

- Suddenly there's a Creator who we should worship;
- A Heavenly Father who loves us;
- A Saviour who rescues us; and
- A supernatural solution to our natural problems.

This is impossible to answer at an abstract level!

(Just like it's impossible to answer, “How do I know I'm not dreaming this?”)

But there are enough clues to God's existence:

- Why is there something instead of nothing?
- Why is the universe so uniform, so regular, so life-producing?
- How can life come from non-life?
- Why do we universally believe in right and wrong, good and evil?
- How can we explain beauty, joy and purpose?
- How can we explain the value of a human life?
- Why is there an urge to worship a God?

In addition (for the Christian God) how can we explain (away):

- The life and teachings of Jesus...?
- Reliability of the Bible?
- Evidence for the resurrection?
- Our relationality?

If we put these all together, and if we are honest with ourselves, we have hearts that cry out “Eternity!”, “There must be more!”, and “There must be a God!”.

The wonderful news is, if we do cry out, this God will answer.

## 7. ANSWERING SOME COMMON OBJECTIONS<sup>23</sup>

### 1. **If everything needs a cause, then what caused God?**

#### **Response**

We didn't say that everything needs a cause; we said everything *that has a beginning* needs a cause. Only finite, contingent things need a cause. God didn't have a beginning; He is infinite and He is necessary. God is the uncaused cause of all things.

### 2. **The moral law is either beyond God or arbitrary**

Bertrand Russell asked where God derived the moral law. He said that either it is beyond God and He is subject to it (and hence not the ultimate good), or it is an arbitrary selection of codes that originated in God's will. So either God is not ultimate or He is arbitrary; in either case He is not fit to be worshiped.

#### **Response**

Russell fails to exhaust the possibilities, however, and we can sidestep the horns of his dilemma. Our contention is that the moral law is rooted in God's good and loving nature. This is not an ultimate beyond God, but within Him. And it is impossible for God to will something that is not in accordance with His nature. God is good and cannot will evil arbitrarily. So there is no dilemma.

### 3. **Can God make a mountain so big that He can't move it?**

This is a meaningless question. It asks, 'Is there something that is more than infinite?'

#### **Response**

- It is logically impossible for anything to be more than infinite, because infinite has no end. The same applies to questions like, 'Can God make a square circle?' It is just like asking, 'What is the smell of blue?' It is a category mistake – colours don't smell and circles can't be square. These are logical impossibilities. They contradict themselves when we try to think about them.
- God's omnipotence does not mean that He can do what is impossible, only that He has the power to do anything that is actually possible, even if it is impossible for us. Any mountain that God makes, He can control, put where He wants, and disintegrate if He likes. You can't ask for more power than that.

### 4. **If God has no limits, then He must be both good and evil, existence and nonexistence, strong and weak**

#### **Response**

- When we say that God is unlimited, we mean that He is unlimited in His perfection. Now evil is not a perfection; it is an imperfection. The same is true of nonexistence, weakness, ignorance, finitude, temporality, and any other characteristic that implies limitation or imperfection.
- We might say that God is 'limited' in that He can't enter into limitations, like time, space, weakness, evil – at least not as God. He is only 'limited' by His unlimited perfection.

### 5. **God is nothing but a psychological crutch, a wish, a projection of what we hope is true**

#### **Response**

This kind of argument makes a serious error. How can men know that God is 'nothing but' a projection, unless they have 'more than' knowledge? To be sure that man's consciousness is the limit of reality and that there is nothing beyond it, one must go beyond the limits of man's consciousness. But if one can go beyond, then there weren't limits. *This objection says that nothing exists outside our minds*, but a person must go outside the boundaries of his own mind to say that. If the objection were true, it must be false. It defeats itself.

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<sup>23</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 29-33



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# ***How do you know God exists?***

*(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)*

## **PAGE 12: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **IDENTIFY AND CLARIFY THE ORIGIN OF THE QUESTION**

Case Scenario: Over the past year you have developed a strong friendship with a non-Christian classmate who is in your Problem Based Learning Tutorials. Your friendship has grown such that on every Saturday you head to the library together. This particular Saturday you are revising anatomy and to do so you both watch an online tutorial from one of your lecturers. The featured lecturer at one point alludes to the evolutionary development of the human skeletal structure and as a side comment makes a sniggering remark towards 'religious proponents' of the 'intelligent design theory' of human development. At the conclusion of the online tutorial you and your classmate go to grab a quick coffee before you hit the books again. On the way to coffee with the tutor's words still ringing in your ears your friend asks you, "I know you are an intelligent person and I don't doubt that your faith is genuine, but how can you believe in a God when there is no evidence for his/their/its existence?"

1. Consider how you would enter into and empathise with your friend's objection to answer the possible existential origin of the question.
2. For all origins of a question, a person will hold presuppositions. Sometimes the presuppositions will be 'under the surface' and require probing to be identified. It is common for people questioning the existence of God to declare their presuppositions in the form of a question during conversation. As a group consider how you would address each of the following worldview presuppositions expressed as a question in conversation:
  - a. Religious people are irrational.
  - b. People believe in God because of cultural expectations and surrounds.
  - c. Religion causes too much trouble, religion is the root of conflict.
  - d. Can't believe anything unless you can prove it.
3. Consider why/how the existence of God (as revealed in the Bible) provides a better explanation of the reality of the world we live in, in comparison to a world where God is absent. Do this by thinking about what realities are hard to explain if God does not exist.
  - a. Discuss any limitations to your argument and any possible counter arguments to your suggestions.
  - b. Lead to the Gospel
    - i. How do these 'true facts' reveal the God of the Bible with accuracy?
    - ii. Read Romans 1:18-32 and Psalm 14:1. How can these passages of Scripture function in a conversation either directly or indirectly with your classmate once they are 'receptive' to God's truth?
    - iii. It has been said that if a human wanted to communicate to ants, the best way to do this is by becoming an ant. Consider how this analogy and the reality of the incarnation of God as a full human can be used to explain the logical existence of God as well as the love of God.