

**Dealing With Objections: Does God Even Exist?**

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*“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” -Matthew 28:18-20*

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**Go Make Disciples Group Check-in:** Last week we asked you to pray for the Lord to send you and others into the harvest field to make disciples. In addition, we asked you to identify who it is that God is calling you to disciple, as well as assess where they are spiritually and how you can “go” into the world. Share with your group who that person (or one of those people) is and how you intend to reach them based on where they are at spiritually.

As we go share the gospel with others, we should expect opposition. As Jesus was teaching he often faced objections from the Jewish religious leaders, and even from the disciples at times. Over the next four weeks we will cover different ways we can respond to common objections. However, before we get into this week’s objection to the gospel, here are three important perspectives for us to keep in mind as we deal with these objections (courtesy of Cru.org).

1. God can and will use us regardless of what we know.
2. There is nothing wrong with responding with, “That is a great question. Can I think about it and get back to you?”
3. Every other religion struggles to adequately answer the basic questions of origin of the universe, purpose, moral law, etc. In other words, we should not always feel like we are on defense as Christian evangelists.
4. We must remember that we are not merely responding to a position, but rather attempting to persuade a person. Our goal is not to win the argument, but to lead people toward faith in Jesus.

**Group Check-in:** As you share the gospel with non-believers, which of these four perspectives will be hardest for you to keep in mind?

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One of the more common objections as we seek to share the gospel with atheists and agnostics is whether God even exists. Atheists do not believe there is no God and agnostics believe we cannot know whether God exists or not. To those who are most skeptical it will be quite hard, if not impossible to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that God exists. However, as my apologetics professor points out, neither can an atheist prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Big Bang or macro-evolution is true (they are called theories and not laws for a reason). Therefore, the challenge for us is not to prove that God exists, but rather to show that the existence of God better explains life’s complicated questions when compared to certain scientific theories often assumed true by atheists and agnostics.

So here are five good reasons to believe that God exists, as well as some objections we can raise towards atheistic and agnostic beliefs (via: “Reasonable Faith” by William Lane Craig)

**Reason One: God makes sense of the origin of the universe.**

More and more scientific research is concluding that the universe has a beginning, as opposed to being eternal. Which then raises the questions, Why did the universe begin? And where did it come from?

Christianity answers these questions in that the universe began because God created it, and He did so for His glory. He created us so that we might know Him and love Him and be with Him and praise Him. Furthermore, (Warning: this is about to get philosophical!) whatever created the universe must be uncaused, timeless, and immaterial. For whatever begins to exist must have a cause, and both time and material were created at the beginning of the universe. Well, what do we know that is eternal, timeless, and immaterial? God!

The best explanation that an atheist or agnostic can give to these answers is simply to say that the universe popped into being uncaused out of nothing. Therefore, good questions to ask your atheist or agnostic friend are: Why do you think the universe began? How do you think the universe began? Which do you think is more plausible, the existence of God, or the universe popping into existence uncaused and out of nothing?

**Reason Two: God makes sense of the fine-tuning of the universe for intelligent life.**

There are several of these fine-tuning examples in our world, including distance of the Earth from the Sun, distance of the moon from the Earth, the tilt of the Earth’s axis, balance between matter and anti-matter in the universe, the strength of gravity, amount of oxygen in the air, etc. The amount of variance that is permitted in each of these examples is incredibly, incredibly, incredibly small in order for intelligent life to continue to exist here on Earth. Then, one must also take into consideration that the near-impossible probability of ALL of those examples being randomly fine-tuned together in order to sustain life here on Earth.

Yet, that is what atheists and agnostics believe took place. That all of these so-called “dials” aligned perfectly in order to sustain life here on Earth. Christians, on the other hand argue that these “dials” didn’t randomly land on the position they needed, but that God fine-tuned each of these conditions so that life would be sustained here on Earth.

Again, we must ask our atheist and agnostic friend which is a more reasonable explanation of the two?

**Reason Three: God makes sense of the objective morals in the world.**

If God does not exist then objective morals do not exist, because for something to be objective it must be right or wrong independently of whether anybody believes it to be so. Even an well known atheist, J.L. Mackie admitted, “If...there are...objective values, then it makes the existence of God more probable than it would have been without them.”

Which is why many atheists deny objective morals and instead argue that our current morality has evolved from biological and social evolution. But, does anyone really believe that things such as rape, torture of the innocent, and child abuse are only wrong because they are not socially advantageous or because they have become taboo? Who is willing to come out and say that in the right social context or a different time era those things would be ok. You would have to unless you concede that there are objective morals in the world.

And if there are objective morals in the world, then those have to come from an authority outside of human existence. Otherwise, another human authority could argue for calling immoral behavior moral (as Hitler did with the holocaust). Once again, God is the most reasonable explanation for the source of objective morals, as He is Good and has written his law upon our hearts (Jer. 31:33).

Therefore, good questions to ask our atheist friends are: Do you believe in objective morals? If yes, where do you think those come from? If no, when do you think that things such as rape, torture of the innocent, and child abuse are permissible?

**Reason Four: God makes sense of the historical facts concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.**

While the truth of Jesus' resurrection is not widely accepted, many New Testament scholars do agree that: 1) Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of women followers on Sunday morning, 2) On separate occasions different individuals claimed to have seen the risen Jesus, and 3) The disciples came to agreement to believe in the resurrection, tell others about it, and die for that belief when they had every reason not to.

Again, which is the more plausible explanation for these widely agreed upon truths? Atheists and Agnostics often argue that the body was stolen or that Jesus really did not die on the cross. But those are even universally rejected by contemporary scholarship. Most atheists and agnostics have to concede that there is no naturalistic explanation for the three events above.

However, Christianity can easily explain these three as God raised Jesus from the dead. If God exists then He is surely powerful enough to raise someone from the dead. If God exists and raised Jesus from the dead, then that would surely inspire Jesus' disciples to risk their lives to proclaim this news.

Therefore, good questions to ask our atheist and agnostic friends are: "How would you explain the three events above", and "Do you believe that is more plausible than God existing?"

**Reason Five: God can be immediately known and experienced.**

From a logic standpoint, this is the weakest of the five reasons, but perhaps it is the most convincing. We see evidence of God's existence in sunrises, sunsets, the size of the universe,

the love of a mother for a child, the care for the least of these, and how He has answered prayers and changed our lives now that we have known Him (e.g. our personal testimony).

In other words, each of us have several experiences in our lives to illustrate that as we draw near to God He will draw near to us and make Himself known to us (James 4:8).

Consequently, we can draw on these experiences and 1) Ask our atheist or agnostic friends to give their most plausible explanation for it? or 2) Invite our atheist or agnostic friends to draw near to God and to make Himself known to them.

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Obviously, these five reasons are not a foolproof way of leading our atheist and agnostic friends to Christ. Regardless of how clearly truth is presented, the Enemy still works to blind the eyes of those who are far from God, and thus God still needs to change their hearts and open their eyes to see the truth of who He is.

But for the atheist or agnostic that God has done that work in, these five reasons stacked together make quite the case for God's existence. Again, which is more plausible, that the universe randomly came into existence and all of the fine tuning happened by chance, and we all happened to agree on the same moral compass (when we can't agree on anything else), and it was by some unexplainable phenomenon that the grave is empty and the disciples risked their lives for the gospel, and all of our testimonies have multiple different explanations. OR, is more plausible that God exists.

William Occam, a friar in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, said that, "The simplest explanation is often the best." May our atheist and agnostic friends agree and put their faith in the simpler explanation of God's existence.

**1. Which of the above reasons for God's existence do you find most convincing?**

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**Go Make Disciples**

If you didn't complete this assignment this week, please do so for next week.

1. **PRAY** for workers, including yourself, to be sent into the harvest field to make disciples.
2. **IDENTIFY** who it is that God is calling you to disciple by praying for discernment.
3. **ASSESS** where this person(s) are at spiritually and how you can "go" into their world.

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**Praying This Week**

- Thank God for making His existence known to us
- Ask God to give us courage to share the gospel with atheists and agnostics.
- Ask the Spirit to change their hearts to believe in Jesus and the gospel.