

How Can I Know God is Real?

You may have seen the movie *God's Not Dead*, but what does it mean to *you*? Even those who have seen this movie are still left with lingering questions that need to be answered. There are three primary reasons people question God's existence:

- (1) **Intellectual**: They have worked out the logic of the non-existence of God in their head. They reach no convincing or conclusive reasons to believe in God. You often find this on college campuses.
- (2) **Experiential**: They have experienced a tragedy in their lives and conclude that there is no God (or at least a God who doesn't like me and is not a good God) because if there were a God, he would not have allowed such an evil to happen to me (self assuming that "me" is good and does not deserve evil).

Frequently, these first two reasons are combined. The person has (1) thought logically about the non-existence of God *because* (2) they have experienced a relational tragedy in their lives. This is often boiled down to the phrase "The Problem of Evil."

(3) **Convenience**: If one convinces themselves that there is no God, then it lessens the standard of morality in their life. They reason, "If there is no God, then I can conveniently do what I want to do." This is more of an outright denial of God, who they admit exists, but they just don't care that God exists—this is known as agnostic. The next generation of Americans would fit well into this category. (James White wrote about them in a book called *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated*.)

 **Are you wondering if God is real because God doesn't make sense to you?** Dig into the Bible to find your answers. Have you read the entire Bible to see what God himself has to say? Start with Genesis 1-2, Matthew, and I John.

 **Do you simply not experience God in your life?** Dig into the Bible to hear God talk to YOU. Stay connected to a church where you will see, feel, and experience the love of God alongside others.

Two Websites with helpful articles to think through:

Bethinking- www.BeThinking.org

Christian Apologetics & Research- www.CARM.org

Two helpful books on God's existence:

C.S. Lewis - *Mere Christianity*

Timothy Keller - *The Reason for God—Belief in an Age of Skepticism*

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (11 Corinthians 4:6)

Questions & Answers.....How Can I Know God is Real?

Q: How can I know for sure that God exists when I do not have all knowledge (we live in a closed system)?

A: You can't unless God chooses to reveal himself. However, the good news is that God has indeed revealed himself.

Q: How can I know God? How has He revealed Himself?

A: In the written words of 66 books of the Bible and in Jesus Christ who personally modeled the perfect law of God (John 1:1-18, Heb. 1:1-3). Romans 1:18-32 says you can only know *that* God exists by observing the creation. You can only know God personally through the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible and through His Holy Spirit (see next question).

Q: How else has God revealed Himself?

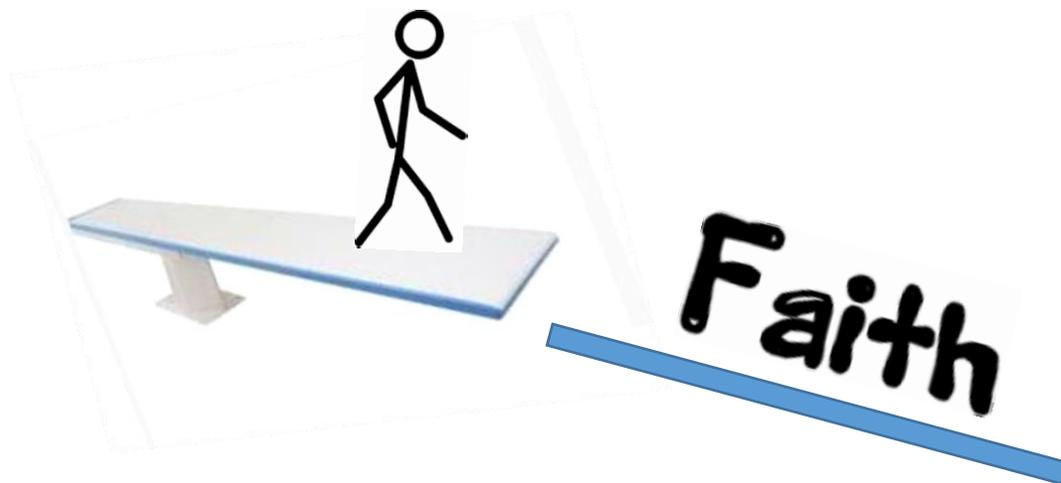
A: Additionally, 50 days after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, God sent the Holy Spirit to live in power inside of those who "heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Q: Can you prove that God exists?

A: You cannot prove that God exists in the sense that you can run a five-step scientific experiment with your five senses.

Q: Is it reasonable for me to believe in God?

A: Absolutely! There are many reasons to believe in God. However, at some point, your understanding of God will run out and you will have to step out on faith—a *very reasonable faith!* Hebrews 11:6 says "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."



Q: What are some logical reasons to believe in God?

A:

- *Cosmological arguments:* These are arguments that relate to cause. It poses the question: How did all that exists come into existence? There must be a first or primary causal agent—God. As Greg Koukl puts it, if you think there was a Big Bang, then at least assume that it would require a Big Banger. Cosmological arguments lay out why it is rational to think that God was the first cause of all things.
- *Teleological arguments:* These are arguments that relate to intelligent design. How did the complexities of the universe come to be? For example, even Darwin in *The Origin of Species* admitted to a “Creator,” and was in awe of the complexity of the eyeball as a result of unguided evolution. Teleological arguments argue from evidence of design to the existence of the designer. There must have been an Intelligent Designer.
- *Ontological arguments:* These are arguments that relate to being. Ontological arguments argue that existence is built into the definition of God (a definition that, among other things, could be summarized as the greatest imaginable being). Augustine said that God made us with a specially shaped void that can only be filled with Him (*Confessions*). Anselm said that simply because you can think of the concept of God, He therefore must exist (*Proslogion*).
- *Moral arguments:* These are arguments that relate to morality. What is morally right and morally wrong? Moral arguments argue that there is a universal moral law and that such a moral law requires a law giver.

Q: Doesn't evolution prove that God doesn't exist?

A: NO! Evolution is not a system of belief, it is the best explanation that scientists feel they have to offer as to how we got here. The primary point of Genesis 1-2 is that God exists and He created the world—but man is entirely different than the rest of the creation. We are made in the image of God with the capacity for a personal relationship with God. God has given *us* the task of working and taking care of the earth.

Evolution and belief in God do not have to be antithetical (some believers hold to both at the same time). Still, some people do turn evolution into a belief system and use that idea to support their “belief” in no God (secularism). Psalm 14:1 “The fool says in his heart ‘there is no God.’”

Q: Can I really know God?

A: Yes, although we will never fully understand God, we can truly know Him and we can certainly understand Him to exist.

“Those who have known and spoken most effectively about man’s misery [without God], are Solomon and Job. The one is the happiest of men, the other the most miserable. One knows by experience the vanity of pleasure, and the other knows the reality of suffering” Blaise Pascal (53).

9 Ways to Know the Gospel of Christ Is True

November 6, 2009

• by [John Piper](#)

• Topic: [Apologetics](#)

1. Jesus Christ, as he is presented to us in the New Testament, and as he stands forth from all its writings, is too single and too great to have been invented so uniformly by all these writers.

The force of Jesus Christ unleashed these writings; the writings did not create the force. Jesus is far bigger and more compelling than any of his witnesses. His reality stands behind these writings as a great, global event stands behind a thousand newscasters. Something stupendous unleashed these diverse witnesses to tell these stunning and varied, yet unified, stories of Jesus Christ.

2. Nobody has ever explained the empty tomb of Jesus in the hostile environment of Jerusalem where the enemies of Jesus would have given anything to produce the corpse, but could not.

The earliest attempts to cover the scandal of resurrection were manifestly contradictory to all human experience—disciples do not steal a body (Matthew 28:13) and then sacrifice their lives to preach a glorious gospel of grace on the basis of the deception. Modern theories that Jesus didn't die but swooned, and then awoke in the tomb and moved the stone and tricked his skeptical disciples into believing he was risen as the Lord of the universe don't persuade.

3. Cynical opponents of Christianity abounded where claims were made that many eyewitnesses were available to consult concerning the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

"After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:6). Such claims would be exposed as immediate falsehood if they could. But we know of no exposure. Eyewitnesses of the risen Lord abounded when the crucial claims were being made.

4. The early church was an indomitable force of faith and love and sacrifice on the basis of the reality of Jesus Christ.

The character of this church, and the nature of the gospel of grace and forgiveness, and the undaunted courage of men and women—even unto death—do not fit the hypothesis of mass hysteria. They simply were not like that. Something utterly real and magnificent had happened in the world and they were close enough

to know it, and be assured of it, and be gripped by its power. That something was Jesus Christ, as all of them testified, even as they died singing.

5. The prophecies of the Old Testament find stunning fulfillment in the history of Jesus Christ.

The witness to these fulfillments are too many, too diverse, too subtle and too interwoven into the history of the New Testament church and its many writings to be fabricated by some great conspiracy. Down to the details, Jesus Christ fulfilled dozens of Old Testament prophecies that vindicate his truth.

6. The witnesses to Jesus Christ who wrote the New Testament gospels and letters are not gullible or deceitful or demented.

This is manifest from the writings themselves. The books bear the marks of intelligence and clear-headedness and maturity and a moral vision that is compelling. They win our trust as witnesses, especially when all taken together with one great unifying, but distinctively told, message about Jesus Christ.

7. The worldview that emerges from the writings of the New Testament makes more sense out of more reality than any other worldview.

It not only fits the human heart, but also the cosmos and history and God as he reveals himself in nature and conscience. Some may come to this conclusion after much reflection, others may arrive at this conviction by a pre-reflective, intuitive sense of the deep suitability of Christ and his message to the world that they know.

8. When one sees Christ as he is portrayed truly in the gospel, there shines forth a spiritual light that is a self-authenticating.

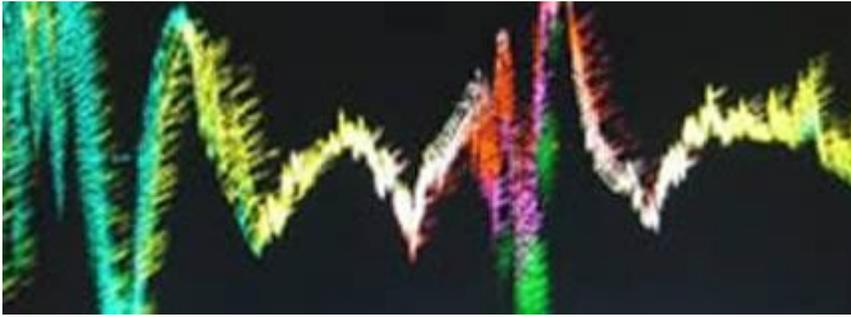
This is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:6), and it is as immediately perceived by the Spirit-awakened heart as light is perceived by the open eye. The eye does not argue that there is light. It sees light.

9. When we see and believe the glory of God in the gospel, the Holy Spirit is given to us so that the love of God might be "poured out in our hearts" (Romans 5:5).

This experience of the love of God known in the heart through the gospel of Him who died for us while we were yet ungodly assures us that the hope awakened by all the evidences we have seen will not disappoint us.



John Piper (@JohnPiper) is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of [more than 50 books](#).



Two Good Reasons for Believing in God

By Peter May

This article is the text of Peter May's opening speech at a debate held at the University of Birmingham on 22 November 2007. The debate was considering the motion "This House Believes God is a Delusion." A [report](#) on the debate is also available.

This debate strikes at the very heart of what it means to be human. I enjoyed reading Julian Baggini's *Very Short Introduction to Atheism*. I want to start with two arguments discussed by Julian.

Firstly, the Cosmological Argument. Julian says this argument is 'utterly awful, sloppy thinking, doubly flawed and a disgrace to the good name of philosophy' (p.94). And I fully agree with him. The way he has set it up is self-defeating. However, the argument as put forward by William Lane Craig hangs on two sound premises with an unavoidable deduction.

Premise 1: Whatever begins to exist has a cause. Things do not suddenly pop into existence for no reason. I don't need to defend that; it is obvious. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

Premise 2: The universe began to exist. Until the middle of the last century, it was widely believed the universe had always existed. However, since Hubble observed that the universe was expanding and the discovery in the 1960s of background radiation, it has become the overwhelming consensus of modern science that the universe began to exist, and did so with a Big Bang, some 13.7 billion years ago.

Conclusion: if whatever begins to exist has a cause and the universe began to exist, then inevitably, the universe has a cause.

This presents us with a choice. Either there was an uncaused first cause or that the cause itself had a cause, which in turn had a cause, ad infinitum. So we either have an infinite regress of causes or an uncaused first cause to break the chain. There is no logical alternative.

Now I don't know if you have ever wondered about the idea of an infinite number of anything. William Craig quotes the famous mathematician Hilbert, who considered the problem in terms of a hotel, with an infinite number of rooms. But it was very busy and had an infinite number of guests. So the manager put up a notice outside saying "No Vacancies – Rooms Available". Craig adds to the absurdity by pointing out that if

all guests, say, in odd numbered rooms were to check out on the same day, mathematicians would still tell us that the hotel was full, because it had an infinite number of guests. Furthermore, if the following day the same thing happened and this was repeated an infinite number of times, the hotel would still contain an infinite number of guests. Actual infinite numbers do not exist. This applies to an infinite regress of causes. Somewhere you have to face an uncaused first cause.

Now science implies several things about this uncaused first cause. As Stephen Hawking and others have shown, not only matter but even time and space themselves came into existence with the big bang. The implication then from science is that such an uncaused first cause would be immaterial, non-spatial, timeless and therefore changeless, and enormously powerful. Furthermore, the exquisite fine-tuning of the universe, whose unchanged physical laws and constants were set at the first moments of the first second of the big bang, imply that such a cause was also unbelievably intelligent.

But there is something else. This cause showed personal agency in deciding to act deliberately and freely (being uncaused) to bring about creation. So we are faced with an uncaused, immaterial, non-spatial, timeless, changeless, powerful and intelligent being, who acted freely and deliberately as a personal agent in Creation. Now who could that be...?

The Bible states emphatically, “In the beginning, God...”

Secondly, the Moral Argument. This is often misunderstood. If you watch the DVD of Craig’s recent debate in London, neither Lewis Wolpert nor John Humphrys could understand it. We are NOT saying that atheists cannot devise a moral code, or live better lives than Christians. On the contrary, Christians are moral failures by definition. You cannot become a Christian without realising that.

No, the issue is this: that in an atheistic framework, you have no objective basis to call anything ultimately good or evil. Atheist morality is like the rules of a local dining club, where men must wear jackets and women must wear skirts. There is nothing objectively wrong in eating without a jacket. Another club down the road might relax the rule about jackets and allow women to wear trousers. These are home made, human rules for the mutual benefit of members at a particular time, place, and culture. They are open for review at any point, depending on local demand.

Now atheists may argue that God must have chosen an equally random set of rules. But that is not so. Christians understand morality to flow directly from God’s essential being. God is a holy God – which means that he is good, he is love, he is just, he is merciful, he is faithful. What we call righteousness flows from these essential attributes of his character. Without that objective basis for justice and goodness, morality would be just a human contract. There would be no ultimate justice and nothing would be objectively wrong in itself.

But our whole system of law and ethics assumes there is an objective reality of good and evil: that it was objectively wrong to kidnap 4 year old Madeleine McCann; that it was objectively wrong to rape and slit the

throat of Meredith, the poor English student in Italy; that 9/11 was a profound moral evil, lacking all mercy, justice and compassion. Christians believe such things are ultimately wrong because they defy the very character of the God who made us.

So the argument can be framed (following Craig):

Premise 1: If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.

Premise 2: But evil does exist. Rape, murder, child abuse are objectively wrong.

Conclusion: If that is true, then God exists.

Julian writes that the problem of evil demands an answer. Our answer is that the atheist hasn't got any grounds for believing in the objective reality of evil. What you are being asked to decide tonight is whether evil actually exists. For if nothing is evil, then everything is permitted.

Finally, I want just to pose a question: if such an uncaused, first cause exists, how could we possibly know him? C.S. Lewis thought about this problem in literary terms. He asked himself how Hamlet could meet Shakespeare, his creator. And he concluded that no way could Hamlet bring about such a meeting. But then it dawned on him, that they could have met and known each other, if Shakespeare had taken the initiative and written himself into the drama as one of its characters. Then Hamlet could have met his creator.

And that is what Christians believe that God has done. The entirely good and holy, uncaused, first cause has taken the initiative and entered our world and meets us uniquely in Christ – God made flesh and dwelling among us – that we might know him, love him and live our lives in the ultimate of fulfilling and transforming relationships, that of knowing God himself.

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<http://www.bethinking.org/does-god-exist/two-good-reasons-for-believing-in-god>