

Why Believe in God (Part 1)

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THE MAIN THING: If someone were to ask you what you believe about God and why, would you be prepared to answer them? (1 Peter 3:15). Dr. Schorr challenges us to find answers and to discuss evidences of the Christian faith with those in our sphere of influence who are skeptical but open minded about Christianity.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Connect and pray as a group*

1. How are you approaching this New Year (Pastor Henry spoke of dragging your heels in the 'snow')? With anticipation? Concern? Dread? Fear? Excitement?
2. Tell of a time when someone has expressed to you their doubt about God's existence? How easy was it for you to give an answer? What reasons do people usually give for their doubts?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

Observation and Reflection

1. Why is it important to be responsive to people about who God is? Read 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 2:7. In what way does Colossians 2:8 also speak to this issue?
2. Pastor Henry spoke of cosmological and teleological arguments for believing in God, and gave many examples (see summary). Which evidences for God do you find most compelling? Least compelling? Why?
3. Read Isaiah 40:25 – 26, 28. What claims does God make about Himself? Why did He make these statements? What kind of response does He want from us? (reference Titus 1:2)

Application.

1. What personal experience can you share that convinced you (and those around you) of God's existence?
2. Examine your own heart. Where do you need to recognize God's work in your life this week? What 'evidence' will help you to grow in your 'faith and knowledge' (Titus 1:2)?
3. What further steps do you need to take to ensure your own understanding of God? (examples: read a book from the bibliography; commit to attending all the worship services for the whole series; watch DVD: 'Indescribable'—Louie Giglio)

Bibliography

- R. C Sproul, Not a Chance: *The Myth of Chance in Modern Science and Cosmology* (Baker Academic, 1994)
Norman Geisler & Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Baker Books, 2013)
Mark Mittleberg, *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask* (Tyndale House, 2010)
Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, *To Everyone and Answer* (IVP Academic, 2004)
D. James Kennedy, *Why I Believe* (Word Publishing, 1999)
William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Crossway, 2008)

THE WORD (NIV)

1 Peter 3:15

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 2:7, 8

⁷ ...rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Titus 1:2

² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

Psalms 19:1

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Genesis 1:1

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Isaiah 40:25-26, 28

²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One....Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

There are many evidences to believe in God and the Christian faith. Based on research of theologians, apologists, historians, scientists and authors, Dr. Schorr introduces us to compelling reasons to believe in the existence of God.

Cosmological argument: (The “How:” Cause-and-effect. What caused the world to be? Where did it come from? How did it get here?). Evidences that the earth had a beginning, from Norman Geisler, include:

- 1) It is running out of useable energy. All the useable energy—heat, light, motion—in the world is decreasing. If the universe had always existed, it would have used up all its energy by now (Moreland).
- 2) The universe is expanding, like a balloon with dots that grow farther apart as you blow it up. Einstein’s Theory of Relativity implied the universe had a starting point, and we can trace the development of the universe back to its origin, the “singularity event” when it exploded into existence (the “big bang”). The universe is expanding (William de Sitter). Through the Hubble telescope, astronomers can see the universe expanding, and the farther away a galaxy is, the faster it moves, implying that the universe is expanding from a point of origin.
- 3) When the universe exploded into being, it left a radiation echo, the wavelength of which is identical to that of a gigantic explosion (Penzias and Wilson).

If the universe had a starting point, then it must have had a cause, a cause beyond the universe, beyond time, space, matter and physical energy. Scientists say that the cause must be similar to the God of the Bible, the Creator of the world (Mark Mittelberg). R.C.Sproul went farther in saying that because God is eternal and self-existent, He is uncaused. God is outside space, matter and time.

Teleological argument: (The “Who”: Intelligent and design. Who is responsible for the intricacies, the symmetry and fine-tuning, the purposefulness and coordination of everything?) When we see a complex design—a watch, the universe, a building—we know that it came from the mind of a designer. Four fundamental forces are constant throughout the universe: 1) the strong nuclear force 2) the weak nuclear force 3) the electromagnetic force 4) the gravitational force. If any of these forces were even stronger or weaker by even a billionth percentage point, there would be no life on earth.

Consider these factors to sustain life on earth: the galaxies are expanding at just the right rate, the sun has just the right mass and age; the earth rotates and revolves around the sun at exactly the right speed, the moon and Jupiter are just the right size and distance from earth. The Bible says that all things are held together by Jesus (Colossians 1:15-18). The odds of earth being life-sustaining by chance are 1×10 to the 123^{rd} power (Donald Page). Likewise DNA has a four letter alphabet that tells each cell of our bodies how to develop. If all the DNA of the trillion cells in the body were lined up, they would stretch to the moon more than 500,000 times. For you to deny there is a Creator and Designer of our universe, you have to believe that Webster’s Dictionary resulted from an explosion in a print shop (Geisler). God created it all! (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 40:25-26,28).

People know intuitively there is a God, but some don’t want God messing with their lives and freedom. Yet if they are open, God will reveal Himself to them. Are you looking for reasons to believe?

“[A] scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason. . . has scaled the mountain of ignorance, he’s about to conquer the highest peak. As he pulls himself over the final rock, he’s greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries reading Genesis 1:1 ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’” (Robert Jastrow).