



The Christian's Answer to Life's Big Questions 1

How Do I Know if God Exists?

APOLOGETICS: The branch of theology concerned with the DEFENCE and RATIONAL JUSTIFICATION of Christianity.

→ How have you used apologetics in the past? Have you seen people use it too defensively or too aggressively? What is the place of apologetics? Any good talks you've heard or books you've read from well-known apologists?

TWOFOLD COURSE PURPOSE (1 Peter 3:15-16)

1. To settle NIGGLING ISSUES for you and STRENGTHEN your FAITH.
2. To give you FUEL to answer their BIG QUESTIONS ... ultimately to show that the answer to EVERY question is JESUS.

→ Do you have any 'niggling issues' / recurring questions / doubts? Which are the big questions that you yourself once wrestled with? Which big questions do you find yourself being asked?

→ Why is Jesus the answer to every question?

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

1. The Bible is NO HELP → Starts with the ASSUMPTION that God exists, never WRESTLES with the question and deals harshly with DOUBTERS.

→ What do we learn from Genesis 1:1, Psalm 14:1 and Romans 1:20?

2. There are various positions with great variance:
 - i) THEIST believes in a god who made and governs creation, but not in the doctrine of trinity or a divine revelation.
 - ii) DEIST believes in a god who created all things, but not in his superintendence and government.
 - iii) MONOTHEIST believes in one God.
 - iv) POLYTHEIST believes in many gods.
 - v) PANTHEIST believes god is all and all is god.
 - vi) ATHEIST believes there is no god
 - vii) AGNOSTIC feels there is not enough evidence either way

→ Who do you know with any of these viewpoints? Before you became a Christian, where were you on this list?

1. COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST

Dawkins: God is a DELUSION ... Hitchens: Not just atheist, but ANTITHEIST

Freud: GOD didn't create MAN, MAN created GOD, because he needs security in a threatening world.

→ Do you find 'new atheism' and their tenets worrying, annoying, sad, convincing ... fill in the blank. What do you think of Freud's statement? Does it have validity?

2. ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

A. Take a Good Look AROUND YOU

COSMOLOGICAL argument = All things that have BEGINNINGS must have CAUSES.

TELEOLOGICAL argument = The belief that PURPOSE & DESIGN are apparent in nature.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN = The more you look at CREATION, the more you see the mark of a CREATOR (Psalm 139:13-14).

e.g.¹ Our SOLAR SYSTEM is balanced on a KNIFE-EDGE → GRAVITY, ATMOSPHERIC GASES, DISTANCE FROM THE SUN, CHARACTERISTICS OF WATER.

e.g.² Biology: Incredible power of human BRAIN + sophistication of the EYE.

e.g.³ Biochemistry: DNA suggests incredible INTELLIGENCE behind life.

→ Which of the wonders of creation do you find most compellingly to the hand of a creator?

→ Do we see evidence that world around us is too complex / well-organised / carefully balanced to come down to chance / created out of chaos? Discuss!

→ Did life evolve here because conditions happened to be perfect or did God put it right here in perfect position for His purposes?

B. Take a Good Look INSIDE YOU

1. We are born with INNATE SPIRITUAL CHARACTERISTICS

- a) Where do concepts like PURPOSE, HOPE, DESTINY come from?
- b) We have the ability to see beyond our own 'ANIMAL INSTINCTS' to something NOBLER, BROADER, KINDER, TRANSCENDENT.
- c) Where does MORAL CONSCIENCE / COMPASS come from?
- d) What about that deep, fundamental need to GIVE and RECEIVE LOVE?

2. Something WITHIN us LONGS to KNOW God = 'God-sized hole'

3. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE of God

4. Widespread TESTIMONY of others (Majority argument)

→ Most people fail to look inside themselves for God. Instead, they look to their surroundings and conclude that since the world is such a mess, God must not be there, if He ever existed at all. They forget that since God created us, we bear His fingerprints + those fingerprints point to His existence. Discuss!

→ Do 1a)-d) come from God, His image in us, or could they be the result of natural laws alone? Is it possible for an individual / society to have a moral compass without God? If we are merely highly evolved animals, how are we able to rise above pure animal instinct?

→ How might you weave your own personal experience of God into your answer to this big question?

→ The Majority Argument states that the theism of people throughout recorded history, across the globe, in so many cultures provides strong demonstration of God's existence. Discuss.

C. Take a Good Look AT JESUS

Jesus came claiming to be GOD in HUMAN FORM.

The BIBLE is clear that Jesus claimed to be GOD.

Think about the IMPACT Jesus has had on this world from the very moment of His birth.

→ What evidence did Jesus give to back up His claim to be God in human form? What 'divine' things did God do? What statements did He make that none of the other figures across the world religions made?

→ What has that impact been numerically, in effect, in society, in nations, in hearts?

WRAP-UP

Now in the light of all that, what approach do you think you'd take if someone asked you why you believe in God, or, perhaps, why should they?