

Why it is reasonable to believe in God.

Apologetics is that branch of Christian theology which answers the question, Is Christianity rationally defensible? One of the central themes of apologetics is to do with the existence of God.

Genesis 1:1: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* In the law of first-mention, we know that it is important to examine where things are first mentioned in order to understand them better. If we want to understand the universe, we need to understand that God created it. This is an important starting point. If we want to understand human beings, we need to know that God created them. In this message I aim to provide for you the logical necessity of a transcendent, eternal being as the ultimate explanation for the existence of the universe. Believing in God is fundamental for anyone who wants to tap into a faith filled life. Many people are religious but do not live like God exists. **Hebrews 11:6:** *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."* Some people believe in God, but they see Him as a random force who is not personal enough to reward. **Our belief in God will affect how we live. Our theology will influence our morality.** A lot of the social ills we see today are because we live in a society that is rejecting the very existence of God; the mindset that says, "God is dead". **Psalms 14:1:** *"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good."* I love how Paul boldly challenged his counterparts with regards to God as our Creator. He challenged them concerning their perception of God. **Acts 17:24-25:** *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else."* I will outline the cosmological, teleological, moral arguments for the existence of God. I trust that this message will equip you to confidently refute those who challenge you about whether God exists or not.

A note of caution here is that how we believe and what we believe about God is crucial. One of the objections to the existence of God is that people invent gods to suit their needs. For example, if they are farmers, they invent rain gods that help them with harvest. If people are hunters, they invent gods who are protectors etc. This is valid and explained in Romans 1:21-25 *"21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen."*

It is important to note that the God of the Bible is not one we would invent. He is just and calls us to account for the lives we have lived. It would be much easier to invent a God who is a *sugar daddy* with a blessing button to bail us out of trouble every time. **It would be much easier to invent a God who is more manageable than the God of the Bible.**

1. The cosmological argument for the existence of God

Romans 1:20: *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."*

The existence of the universe demands a cause beyond itself, ultimately leading to the conclusion of a divine Creator. If I see a painting the first question I will ask is, "Who is the artist?" "Is that a Van Gogh, or Picasso etc ?" With anything made we say that, but somehow some people change the rules when it comes to the universe. In fact, many people now worship the universe. It is a form of animism that says things like, "the universe will help you." *Rom 1:25 "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen."*

2. The teleological argument for the existence of God

This is sometimes called the argument from design. **When one considers the intricate design of the universe it is foolish to think it came about randomly.** This is also linked to what some refer to as the *fine-tuning argument* for creation. As I share with you how God is so specific in creation ask yourself the question, why would He be so careful in the design of the universe and not interested in my everyday life? That's why Jesus told us not to worry, as God knows every hair on our head. **The fundamental constants in the universe are finely tuned to permit the existence of life.** For example, the **cosmological constant** is a value that represents the energy density of empty space in the universe. It plays a crucial role in determining the expansion of the universe. Scientists know that if the cosmological constant were even slightly larger, the universe would have expanded too rapidly for galaxies, stars, and planets to form. Conversely, if it were slightly smaller, the universe would have collapsed back on itself before life could develop. This delicate balance is evidence that the universe was intricately designed and reinforces what scripture says, that "we were fearfully and wonderfully made." Another example is the exact strength of the **electromagnetic force** that governs interactions in the universe, particularly between molecules and atoms. The precise strength of the electromagnetic force allows for the formation of stable molecules necessary for the existence of life. If the electromagnetic force were slightly stronger, atoms would bond so tightly that molecules essential for life, such as water, couldn't form. Conversely, if it were slightly weaker, chemical bonds would be too weak to form stable structures. A third example of this fine tuning of the universe is the mass of **neutrons and protons**. If the mass of the neutron were slightly different, hydrogen would be the only stable element in the universe, resulting in a cosmos devoid of heavier elements necessary for life. Similarly, if the mass of the proton were altered, the stability of hydrogen and other elements crucial for life would be compromised. It's amazing that the universe is so precisely calibrated to ensure that we have life as we know it. Another example of this fine-tuning is **The Strength of Gravity**: If gravity were slightly stronger, stars would burn out too quickly for life to form. If it were slightly weaker, stars would never ignite, leading to a universe without light or heat. **The Distance between the Earth and the Sun**: If the Earth were slightly closer to or further from the sun, it would be too hot or too cold to support life as we know it. The current distance is an Astronomical Unit (AU) which is 150 million kms. That sounds far, but here is a fun fact, the distance to the farthest planet Neptune is 4.5 billion kms. **The Existence of Water**: Water is crucial for life as we know it, and its unique properties are vital for various biological processes. If the properties of water were even slightly different, life might not be possible. This understanding of how specific God was in creation has helped me as I pray into certain situations. I realise how God is indeed very interested in every detail of our lives, as seen in how He designed the universe. Let's also remember that in the same way that God established various physical laws, He also has spiritual laws that are universal, such as the law of sowing and reaping.

Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

You might be wondering where this perfection comes from. Who holds it together? **John 1:1-3:** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made;** without him nothing was made that has been made."*

*Colossians 1:17, "He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.**"*

3. The moral argument for the existence of God

William Lane Craig: *"If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist. By objective moral values, I mean moral values which are valid and binding whether anybody believes in them or not."*

It is difficult for an atheist to build a case for universal moral laws despite the fact that they go about making judgements about other people's behaviour e.g. sex traffickers etc. ***If you believe something is universally impermissible then some objective transcultural source of morality must exist which sounds a lot like God.*** **Dr Rick Stedman**

Ask atheists why they don't think murdering other people is a good idea. If they agree that there is a transcultural source of morality, ask them where it comes from. Who put it there? How did our consciences come about if we just evolved from primordial soup? (*Primordial soup is a term used by evolutionists which refers to the hypothetical prebiotic broth of organic compounds from which life on Earth is thought to have originated*). The alternative to God as the moral lawgiver is moral subjectivism or relativism. **The world will not be able to function under moral relativism.** *James 4:12:* *"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbour?"*

Who wrote the law on the hearts of men? *Romans 2:14-15:* *"Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are **written on their hearts**, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them."*

C.S. Lewis, who was an atheist prior to being an apologist stated, "My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"

C.S. Lewis popularized what was called the Law of Common Decency, showing us that it had to come from somewhere. Everyone has an idea of what is perfect, true, and beautiful. If you compare the great moral systems in the world over the centuries, they are very similar. That's why we frown upon the outliers like Cannibalism. When you compare moral values throughout the ages you see the similarity when it comes to things like faithfulness in marriage, honesty in speech, goodwill and kindness etc. **This universal law or what philosophers call natural law, cannot be explained without considering that man was created in the image of a God who has moral absolutes.** If these laws were derived purely from the different cultures, they wouldn't be so similar. Therefore, we embrace Romans 2:15 mentioned above, that the law has been written on our hearts. This had to come from somewhere. Stemming from this natural law we also see that human beings have a strong need for justice and vindication. We live in a world where often the wicked prosper. How will this be resolved without having a God who will be the supreme judge in the afterlife? **If we study history, the most effective and ethical systems have**

been tied to belief in the existence of God. Unfortunately, many have believed in false gods and we have seen the fruit thereof.

Alvin Plantinga: "Without God, there would be no way to show that one action is moral and another isn't since there would be no moral standard beyond individual or societal opinion."

Frank Turek co-authored the book "I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist" with Norman Geisler, which presents arguments for the existence of God and the truth of Christianity. He said this:

If atheism is true, then there can be no right or wrong; anything goes. But there are right and wrong things, so atheism must be false. In other words, if there is such a thing as evil, then there must be such a thing as good, and if there is such a thing as good, then you can't have atheism.

4. **Sensus Divinitatis:** Reformed epistemology, popularised by the philosopher Alvin Plantinga, suggests that humans have a cognitive faculty called the **sensus divinitatis**, or "sense of the divine," which predisposes them to believe in God. According to Plantinga, this faculty is innate and operates similarly to other cognitive faculties like perception or memory. *Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."* It's almost as if people have to be brainwashed, like in Communism, to come to a place of denying the existence of God. The existence of God explains the universal longing of the human heart. Billions of people from different cultures, times and places have believed in God. Mankind has been described as irreversibly *homo religiosus*, a religious creature. There are some philosophies that had no god, like Buddhism, but the followers eventually invented one. The Buddha did not teach on the existence of a deity but over the centuries his followers converted Gautama Buddha himself into a god. This shift is also a shift into a personal deity. People are not satisfied with an abstract force. People want to know that there is someone out there not just some THING. Atheism does not satisfy the God-shaped void in human beings. This shift was also seen in Hinduism where the highly philosophical Brahman, an abstract higher power, was eventually overshadowed by devotion to individual personal gods. People have a strong need for a point of reference outside of their own existence, otherwise life would be meaningless and arbitrary. You see this in the almost religious fervour as people look for UFO's. We are longing for something out there.

5. **Encounters and changed lives:** Feelings of awe, transcendence, or encounters with the divine, can provide a strong sense of the reality of God's existence. **2 Peter 1:16: "For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."**

John 9:25: "He replied, 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'" This is spoken by the man who was born blind, after Jesus healed him.

Just like the man born blind whom Jesus healed, many of us have had personal encounters with Lord which the world can be in denial about, but we know what we have experienced. It is evidence that God exists when you see the radical life change some people make.

Colossians 3:9-10: "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

1 Cor 6:9-10 "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Atheist Argument	Christian Apologist Response
Science and Natural Explanations	While science explains natural phenomena, it does not exclude the possibility of a transcendent creator. Many Christian apologists argue that science and faith can coexist, as they address different aspects of reality.
Lack of Empirical Evidence	The existence of God is not dependent on empirical evidence alone. There are philosophical, experiential, and logical arguments supporting the existence of God. Think of all the things you believe in without seeing them e.g. Iceland, the wind etc
Problem of Evil	The problem of evil does not necessarily negate the existence of God. Various responses, such as the Free Will Defence and the Greater Good Defence, argue that God's existence is compatible with the presence of evil.
Divine Hiddenness: It refers to the question of why, if God exists, there isn't clearer and more universally compelling evidence of His existence.	The apparent hiddenness of God does not necessarily mean God does not exist. Christian apologists often argue that God's presence is evident through personal experiences, religious revelations, and faith. Philosophical arguments for the existence of God, such as the cosmological argument or the teleological argument, provide intellectual justifications for belief in a higher power. While these arguments may not provide direct sensory evidence of God, they offer rational reasons to believe in a divine being.
Logical Incoherence of God's Attributes	Atheists often point out apparent contradictions in the concept of God (e.g., omnipotence vs. omnibenevolence). God has manifold wisdom and describes himself in varied ways that teach us to embrace ambiguity e.g. Grace and Truth; kindness and severity of God. Think of your parents, surely they had various attributes, some of which seemed opposite to others. Hebrew mindset embraces ambiguity.
Religious Diversity	The existence of various religions and beliefs does not necessarily disprove the existence of God. Christian apologists argue that religious diversity may reflect humanity's diverse cultural and historical contexts, but they maintain that objective truth exists.

In conclusion, let's seek to engage the world on these matters as exemplified by Paul in this passage. He starts with where they were at:

Acts 17:22-31: Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now

he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the cosmological argument, as outlined in Romans 1:20, challenge your perspective on the origins of the universe?
2. Consider the teleological argument presented in the message. How does the intricate design of the universe influence your understanding of its origins and purpose?
3. Reflect on the moral argument for the existence of God. How do you think atheists and secular humanists reconcile the existence of objective moral values with their worldview?
4. What are your thoughts on the concept of *sensus divinitatis* proposed by Alvin Plantinga? How does this idea resonate with your personal experiences and beliefs?
5. Before you came to Christ had you ever experienced moments of awe or transcendence that led you to consider the existence of God? How did these experiences shape your faith journey?
6. Explore the responses to common atheist arguments provided in the message. How do these responses influence your understanding of faith and reason?
7. Reflect on the idea of engaging with others about matters of faith, as exemplified by Paul in Acts 17:22-31. How can you apply this approach in your own interactions with people of different beliefs?
8. Consider the notion of religious diversity and its implications for the existence of God. How does this diversity challenge or strengthen your faith?
9. Reflect on the statement, "Our belief in God will affect how we live." How does your belief in God impact your daily life and decision-making?
10. Think about the quote from Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." How does faith play a role in your relationship with God and your pursuit of a faith-filled life?

Assignments:

1. Write an essay analyzing the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments for the existence of God presented in the message. Discuss how these arguments shape your understanding of faith and reason.
2. Conduct a reflective journaling exercise where you explore your personal encounters with the divine. Reflect on how these experiences have influenced your beliefs and worldview.
3. Engage in a dialogue with a peer who holds different beliefs regarding the existence of God. Share your reflections on the message and discuss how your perspectives align or differ. Reflect on the insights gained from this conversation and how it impacts your understanding of faith and spirituality.