

Why Should I Believe In God?

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE IN GOD?

I once heard of a preacher who asked a young boy why the young fellow believed in God. After thinking about the question for a few seconds, the boy replied, "I don't know; I guess it's been in our family for a long time."

For some people, faith has been in the family for a long time. For others, faith has been completely absent. Americans live in a strange situation regarding belief in God. In survey after survey, over 90% of the people in the United States express their conviction that there is a God. Yet, in public universities and in our national media, faith is constantly either ridiculed or ignored. You might say that in America today, belief in God is a persecuted majority opinion.

But, why should I believe in God? Both believers and unbelievers often have little more idea of their reasons than the young boy mentioned earlier. Those who believe sometimes encourage faith simply because "it makes you happy" or "it helps your marriage work better." Unbelievers, on the other hand, have their own unexamined opinions. They are sometimes heard dismissing God by saying things like "everyone knows that science has disproved the existence of God" or "religion is simply a convenient crutch for the emotionally weak." In these cases, neither believers nor unbelievers are actually dealing with the evidence. And neither approach will adequately prepare a person for dealing with the hard realities and questions that life presents to us all.

As a believer, I am convinced that belief in God is built on solid evidence and is consistent with reason. Faith is not irrational. It is the best explanation of the best evidence.

In this study we are going to examine four reasons why we should believe in God. Obviously, these four are not the only ways in which people have arrived at faith. Different approaches are appreciated by different people. These are simply the ones that have most impressed me.

REASON #1 - Right and Wrong Are Everywhere

The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), wrote, "Two things fill the mind with...admiration and awe...the starry heavens above and the moral law within." Kant observed a puzzling "sense of ought" in people. Though people in different cultures sometimes have differing specific moral codes, every culture has a sense of morality. No people are without it. As someone has observed, even thieves know it is wrong to cheat a partner in crime!

C. S. Lewis, the British writer who became a great defender of faith, wrote in *Mere Christianity* (1943) about his own experience with what is often called the "moral argument" for faith:

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? If the whole

show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it (p. 45)?

Human beings, whether believers or not, possess an undeniable sense of right and wrong. We hear young children cry out, “That isn’t fair!” or “You cheated!” Even unbelievers acknowledge that something is horribly wrong when anyone, perhaps a murderer or a terrorist, is “without any conscience.”

The Apostle Paul wrote about this universal moral sense in the letter to the Romans: *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law...they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts* (Romans 2:14-15).

Indeed, right and wrong are everywhere and call on us to explain their origin and existence. I believe they indicate the existence of God, the source of morality.

REASON #2 - Nothing Comes From Nothing

Medieval philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), observed that the existence of the universe implies the hand of a creator. Years earlier, David had expressed the same thought: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world* (Psalm 19:1-4).

Nonbelievers who theorize about the beginning of the universe often push the starting point back untold billions of years and begin with the most simple forms of matter. However, they are still left with the same old question: from where did the first thing (atom, electrical impulse, cell, etc.) come? Nothing comes from nothing.

On a much smaller scale, we regularly acknowledge that behind everything we observe there stands a creator. Whether it is a beautiful garden, a house, a statue, a coffee maker or a poem, everything that is reflects a creator. How then can we deny a creator for the universe? Unless we have assumed before we started that there is no God, why would we deny the existence of the One who must have made all that is?

REASON #3 - Design Points To A Designer

This line of reasoning is actually a continuation of the previous reason. Aquinas observed that not only does the world exist, but it exhibits an amazing level of design. Surely that design points to a designer. Could all of the remarkable things about the world simply be the result of fortunate accidents? Or does our planet, the human body and everything else point us in the direction of God?

As one indication of design, let’s consider the earth. The speed of rotation, amount of water, distance from the sun and the moon and the tilt of its axis are all perfect for sustaining human life. Even the slightest variation in any of these factors would destroy us all. Can this be

attributed to a series of accidents, or does the design indicate a designer?

David marveled at the intelligent design he saw in the human body: *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well* (Psalm 139:14).

The classic illustration of this point involves a watch. If we walk by a table and see a beautiful watch that is keeping time, do we assume that someone made the watch, or do we reason that such design can be explained without a designer? Surely, design points to a designer.

REASON #4 - The Human Race Is Incurably Spiritual

The events of September 11, 2001 made a deep impression on the American people. We were stunned by the attacks on our country and we turned to...God. Suddenly and surprisingly, we found that the relentless attacks on faith by universities and media have not been able to wash belief in God out of our minds. Researchers are even starting to wonder out loud if perhaps we are “hard-wired” for spirituality.

Genesis declares that we were created “in the image of God,” and Solomon observed that we are spiritual beings at our very core: *He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

This same lesson has been learned in recent years by observing the people who have lived in countries that for decades have been ruled by atheistic, totalitarian governments. As soon as the iron curtain was pulled back or laws regarding religion were relaxed, we saw, much to our amazement, that faith was very much alive. Spirituality had gone underground for a while, but it had never really disappeared.

Many 19th century philosophers were certain that the 20th century would witness the death of God and that “religious superstition” would cease to influence humanity. But here we are in the 21st century, and billions continue to believe that “we are not alone,” that our souls live on, that there is reality beyond what we can see with our eyes and that a person is more than an accident of nature.

ONE FINAL OBSERVATION

In the debate over the existence of God, the burden of proof is almost always put on the believer. However, if, for the sake of argument, we decide that atheism is the best explanation of the evidence, does that get rid of all our questions? Not by a long shot! Just because someone denies the existence of God does not make the intellectual problems go away. As a matter of fact, they are just beginning. Morality, existence, design and persistent spiritual hunger are just a few of the questions that still await an answer.

In closing, let me repeat: as a believer, I am convinced that belief in God is built on solid evidence and is consistent with reason. Faith is not irrational. It is the best explanation of the best evidence.

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