

Frequently Asked Questions from the Faithless
F.A.Q.s from the Faithless Part 1
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What is Apologetics?

From Greek "Apologia" - ἀπολογία
apo: from logikos: pertaining to word, logic, or reason

Translated as 'defense' 8 times in the Acts 22:1 - Acts 25:16 - 1 Cor. 9:3 - 2 Cor. 7:11
Phil. 1:7 - 2 Tim. 4:16

1 Pet. 3:15 (NASB) - But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...

Used in ancient Greek to mean: A reasonable defense of belief or action. Means in accordance with reason

What is Reason? Reason = rational way of thinking that is characterized by logic, analysis, and synthesis. God wants us to think, be logical, and analyze!

1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB - But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

NIV - Test everything. Hold on to the good.

Scripture teaches that faith and reason are NOT enemies - but allies!

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Matt 22:36 - 38 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.

So what have we learned so far?

- God does not want us to be mindless drones
- God expects us to be logical and reasonable
- God directs us to grow in grace AND knowledge
- God commands us to love Him with all of our minds
- God commissions us to preach the Good News to all of creation!

Mark 16:15 He [Jesus, resurrected] said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Defending our beliefs if and when the opportunity arises!

Giving reasonable answers to honest questions people have about this beautiful - but too often misunderstood - faith of ours. And wrapping those answers in respect and love! Strengthening our faith as we learn that there really are good reasons to believe what we believe!

Indifference

Our culture labels us as outdated, irrational, narrow-minded, and irrelevant. Unfortunately, it's often true! Even worse - our answer to that is often: "Yeah. Whatever. Yawn." We must help to change that perception of the Church by doing what we've been told to do... That is - give an account to any person in any situation with gentleness, respect, and above all, love.

Irrationalism

When we follow Christ, our brains are supposed to come on the trip, too! But too many of us hold on to beliefs which are just plain irrational or have no evidence to back them up! Or worse – have evidence that actually contradicts those beliefs! And to make things even weirder, we often treat that like it is a virtue. “I believe this despite the evidence!” When we do this, we become no better than mindless cult followers who believe because they were told what to believe and to just accept it. Reasons for not being good apologists:

Ignorance

Can't stay in the dark. It is your responsibility to step out into the light and learn how to defend the faith. Don't stay blissful and unaware. Learn about our faith, other faiths, what science has to say, and tackle the tough questions. Grow in knowledge!

Cowardice

It's easy to shy away from engaging anyone with the Good News and why it's believable and reasonable! But God warned us that we would be insulted and persecuted and that lies would be told about us and that we would be rejected (John 15:18 – 21). Well – it comes with the territory.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can be bold and respectful, and loving in our defense. And you'll soon find out that some people really are interested in what we can offer to them and that you might *gasp* actually help lead somebody to a saving faith!

Arrogance and Intellectual Vanity

On the other side, there is a trap we can fall into; the trap of a snotty, know-it-all attitude. BUT! We must be humble and remember that the Truth we defend is a gift of Grace, not of our intellectual achievement. We don't use apologetics to win arguments, but to assist in winning souls.

1 Cor. 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Schlock Apologetics

Apologetics includes studying, reading, and discoursing.

Basing our defense on 'cute,' shoot-from-the-hip, quick, pat, cliché answers in nothing better than Bumper-sticker Theology. The people that you talk to are individuals with their own questions, concerns, and needs. And they deserve to be treated as such! Listen to what they're saying and respond to what you hear!

James 1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Conclusions!

Don't be afraid!

God has not given us a spirit of fear!

2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV) For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

When you don't know an answer, tell the person that... you don't know the answer. Rather than embarrassing yourself by thinking up some dopey bologna answer on the spot. Just say that you don't know now, but you'll go find an answer. BUT THEN GO FIND AN ANSWER! This will also keep the fire going in your conversation with that person.

You cannot do it alone!

The Holy Spirit will bless you both with the correct attitude and the correct answer. (even if that answer is "I don't know now.")

Romans 8:26 - 27

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Don't use Christian-speak!

Want to relate to them? Good. Use language they understand!

Mixing Christianese and King Jimmy English with the conversation - e.g. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him... - can drown a nonbeliever in the Sea of Strange Phrases.

Don't rely on prefab answers!

The more you know about a subject, the more of an expert you become and the more you can try different approaches. And the less you sound like a programmed cultist! These people deserve better than memorized answers!

Your job isn't to win the argument or even to win them!

Your job is to present the truth, in *Love*. The Holy Spirit will work in them. Your conversation may just be a stepping-stone to their conversion, not the end result.

Be blessed by the fact that you were used at all by the Blessed Creator of the universe!
But let Him do His part!

A GOOD evangelist knows how to practice GOOD Pre-Evangelism!

Three Questions in Part 1

How Can I Know God Exists?

Are Faith and Science Enemies?

Is There Such a Thing as Absolute Truth?

Three Questions in Part 2

Is the Bible Reliable?

Why Does God Allow Evil to Exist?

Isn't Christianity a violent religion?

Question #1

In light of the bestselling books by the “new atheists” such as “The God Delusion” or “God is NOT Great” the prevailing thought is that if you believe in God you are delusional. Or, as Stephen Hawking would say, you’re believing in a “fairy tale”. What kind of rational, reasonable proof do we have that the God of the Bible exists?

The Long Answers:

The Universe Began
The Universe is Designed
Unique, abstract nonphysical realities
Objective Moral Values
Humans search for meaning, purpose, and significance
Humans have a sense of the divine
God accounts for the “enigma” of man
Claims, Character, and Credentials of Jesus Christ
God accounts for the meaningful realities of life

Three Short Answers:

The Universe had a Beginning
The Universe demonstrates design.
Everyone has an inborn sense of right and wrong.

ANSWER #1: The Beginning

Evidence implies universe had a beginning
all matter, energy, space and time came from an event
evidence?

Used to be thought universe was timeless and eternal but
in 1910’s Vesto Slipher saw that galaxies were almost all moving away from us

in 1920’s Humason and Hubble took it a step further --
they documented that the nearby galaxies were receding from us slowly, the ones
further out were moving at faster speeds

Einstein’s theory of relativity predicted a “moving” universe, either expanding or
contracting via the coefficient of expansion so, both by observation and theory, we have
ourselves an expanding universe.

The Universe Had a Beginning and is Expanding = The Universe had a Beginner
If all time and space came from that beginning, it must have come from elsewhere,
somehow. There is a reality outside our universe (Transcendent).

And wherever we look, from the lab to the farthest reaches of the visible universe... the laws of nature are the same & unchanging (Designed).

Five Types of Creation "Myths"

Ex Nihilo

Earth Diver

Emergence through multiple "worlds" -- progenitors pass through a series of worlds and metamorphoses until reaching the present world

Creation by dismemberment of a primordial being

Creation by cracking of primordial "egg" or bringing into form from chaos

The Bible alone talks of a beginning to it all.

The Bible talks all over the place of a transcendent God, One beyond it all, not limited by time or space.

The Bible tells us this One stretches out the heavens.

The Bible tells us He has fixed the laws of His creation.

Next time you talk with a skeptic ask questions like:

was there a beginning to it all?

if so, could one reasonable explanation be that it was caused by a being beyond all time and space, a Beginner, an Unmoved Mover - a God?

if so, could He not interact with us even now, as followers of Jesus say He does?

ANSWER #2: The Universe is Designed

The universe shows some amazing fine-tuning for there to be life here now...

The size of our universe

Our neighborhood of galaxies

Our galaxy

Our place in that galaxy

Our sun

Our distance from the star

Our planetary system

Our moon's creation

Our moon now

Our planet's size & spin & tilt

Our crust

Our interior

Our atmosphere

These and many more parameters are hyperfinetuned, some have some wiggle room, but all are necessary.

The Bible is - end to end - filled with the characteristics of a Creator which include: loving, caring, providing, meticulous, a stickler for details...
The Bible calls our current universe not just "good," but "very good"

Next time you talk with a skeptic, ask questions like:

The "odds" of a planet like ours, one absolutely perfectly fit for advanced life, is more than astronomical; why?

Is it not possible that the One who began it all, sustains it all as well, even now?
Wouldn't this indicate a care, a love, a providence down to the finest detail, which describes the God of the Bible?

ANSWER #3: Every Human Being has in inborn sense of right and wrong.

All cultures seem to have a sense of what is right and what is wrong
Therefore, these moral imperatives must be transcendent
Cultures DECIDE to be morally ambiguous and relativistic
Only a transcendent Being with a sense of right and wrong can establish a universal standard.

C. S. Lewis:

A Standard of "Justice"

{As an atheist} 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?

A Standard of "Measurement"

The Moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But, the standard that measures two things is something different from either

What we can ask skeptics?

Would you agree Hitler was an evil man? If so, on what standard do you base that conclusion?

Eventually they must say something like, "Well, everyone knows Hitler was evil."

If "Everyone" knows, then where does this universal standard come from? It must come from a transcendent source -- God!

Scriptures:

Beginning

Genesis 1:1

Genesis 2:4

Genesis 2:3

Psalm 148:5

Isaiah 40:26
Isaiah 45:18
Col. 1:15-17

Isaiah 42:5
John 1:3
Hebrews 11:3

Fixed laws

Jeremiah 33:25 Genesis 2:5-6
Romans 8:18-23 Ecclesiastes 1:3-15
Genesis 1 & 3 Revelation 21:1-22:5

Stretches

Job 9:8
Psalm 104:2
Zech. 12:1
Isaiah 40:22
Isaiah 42:5
Jer. 51:15
Isaiah 44:24
Isaiah 45:12
Jer. 10:12
Isaiah 48:13
Isaiah 51:13

QUESTION #2

How can a Christian believe in Science and the Scriptures?

Science and faith are at odds and science is the enemy of faith. The Bible says kooky things like the universe is only 6500 years old when the Chinese have written historical documents older than that. So, what gives? Are faith and science enemies? How can a Christian believe in science and the Scriptures?

Three Answers

Modern Science could not have developed without a Christian Worldview.
The Bible and Science Show Amazing Parallels.
The Facts are the Same, it's the Interpretation that differs.

Answer #1: Modern Science could not have developed without a Christian Worldview.

Christian worldview gave rise to modern science 3-4 centuries ago

Christian theism taught that an infinite, eternal, personal God made it all
Therefore, to them, the creation was orderly & uniform, moreover...

Man was created in His image, so humans could reason...
and were also capable of discovering truths about God through nature, His creation,
and because they believed that the heavens declared His glory they concluded we
could both conceive of the workings of the world around us, and we were spiritually
driven to do so, almost as if it were an expected human response.

To them, God revealed Himself in 2 ways:
through the Bible (special revelation) and in nature (general revelation)

Bottom line #1: Science was founded and flourished on a Christian worldview which
said the universe was understandable and worthy of being discovered.
Today's claim that the Christian faith is adverse to science in general is a mistake or a
lie. (Although some Christians may be adverse to science.)

The Bible Established:

The physical universe is a distinct, objective reality
The laws of nature exhibit order, patterns, and regularity
The laws of nature are uniform throughout the universe
The physical universe is intelligible
The world is good, valuable, and worthy of careful study
The world is not divine and therefore not a proper object of worship and can be an
object of rational study

The Bible Established:

Human Beings possess the ability to discover the universe's intelligibility
The free agency of the Creator makes the empirical method necessary
God encourages, even propels, science through His imperative to humans to take dominion over nature
The intellectual virtues essential to carrying out the scientific enterprise are part of God's moral laws.

Stanley Jaki

The eminent historian and philosopher of science Stanley Jaki argued that science was "stillborn" in other great civilizations outside Christian Europe because of prevailing ideas not only failed to nourish but also stifled its development.
"The Savior of Science" by Stanley Jaki.

Answer #2: The Bible and Science Show Amazing Parallels

Bible: In the Beginning . . . everything, the entire universe was created from nothing and came into existence.

Science: The Universe has a beginning.

Bible: Now, the Earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Science: Primitive earth was covered with water and an opaque cloud that produced absolute darkness.

Bible: And God said "Let there be (appear hayah) light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" [yom] and the darkness he called "night". And there was evening, and there was morning the first day [yom].

Science: As the Earth cooled and the water began to condense on the planet the thick skies thinned enough to become translucent to the sun's light but not transparent so that light appeared on the surface of the Earth and there was a discernible Night and day.

Bible: God separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky". And there was evening and there was morning, the second day [yom].

Science: As the earth cooled and the sea became more shallow with the formation of clouds, a stable water cycle was established.

Bible: And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear, and it was so. God called the dry ground "land".

Science: Gigantic dome-like granite blocks slowly began to force their way up through the crust, exposing themselves above the sea and earth settled into stable land masses surrounded by the seas.

Bible: Then God said, "Let the land produce [bring forth, sprout, dasha] vegetation; seed-bearing plants and trees of the land that bear fruit with seed in it according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced [yatsa] vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kind.

Science: Now with carbon dioxide and water and with light and land, plants which had been confined to the surface of the waters were being established on land. As these plants proliferated in the translucent light, they began to change the atmosphere to a more transparent nature.

Bible: And God said, "Let there be [appear, hayah] lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let there be [appear, hayah] lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth."

Science: Now, with a transparent sky, the sun, moon, and stars -- which had always been there -- now made their first visible appearance to the surface of the planet Earth. The visibility of the sun, moon, and stars would play a major role as clocks for life; navigational aids for the coming of animals.

Bible: And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures [sheres], and let the birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created [bara!] the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing [nephesh] with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening, and there was morning - the fifth day.

Science: The Cambrian Explosion, saw the sudden and dramatic increase in the number of animal kinds on Earth with the introduction of about 500 million new species of life, the majority of them sea creatures. Marine invertebrates appeared early. Next, various fish appeared. This was followed by birds, marine mammals.

Remember:

Genesis is just giving us the basics; never intending to give great detail.

The minor or non-players aren't mentioned (e.g. dinosaurs, insects, sea sponges, starfish, octopi...). All our needs are mentioned, the things that keep us alive.

This book was written for anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

Bible: (Cont'd) And God said, "Let the land produce [yatsa] living creatures [nephesh] according to their kinds: livestock [behemoth], creatures that move along the ground

[remes], and wild animals [chay], each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made [yatsa] the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Science: The numbers and kinds of mammals grew so great that this time is sometimes referred to as the Age of Mammals. Now there appeared the large quadrupeds and animals which stay low to the ground like rodents and and “wild” animals which could be tamed (wolves) and/or used as beasts of burden (horses).

Bible: Then God said, “Let us make [asah] man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created [bara] man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Science: A new species appeared on the planet which would change things dramatically. These new creatures were utterly unique:

They questioned their existence.

They displayed evidence of a moral conscience.

They could manufacture tools with tools.

They had complex art, language, and music.

They had an awareness of a God.

They exhibited a desire to worship God.

They had a desire to discover truth.

This creature is Homo sapiens - modern man.

Bible: Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so the seventh day he rested from all his work.

Science: Since man appeared on Earth, there has been nothing significantly new added to this planet. Moreover, rather than a planet bursting with creativity, extinction seems to be the norm today.

Conclusion:

Genesis goes step for step with what we see in nature.

It appears a man, Moses, living thousands of years ago, nailed the creation sequence, one we’ve only recently discovered.

We have a planet that appears to have been made just for us.

Science can be used as a tool to defend our faith...

Answer #3: The Facts are the Same, it’s the Interpretation that differs.

Science has “evolved” from a search for truth to a way of life. How did this happen and what is the eventual outcome of a world lived out according to “naturalism”?
an illustration

Bob and Eddie agreed on the facts; they disagreed in each other’s interpretations of those facts. The big fuss comes over differences in interpretations - not facts.

So, what’s all this have to do with defending the faith?
Science is not truth but just a way to find Truth (or The Truth)
We can use it in 1) our personal lives and 2) as a witness to the ignored community of scientists.

Use the sciences as a tool to discover more about God and the Bible and the beautiful creation.

Use the facts of nature (remember, they are from God) to bolster or correct your own biblical interpretations.

= WIN/WIN situation.

For scientists’ sake

Learn more about the sciences (it can help you be a better witness to them)

Encourage scientists to study more deeply their art (it will reveal our God)

Remember, they are not the enemy (our struggle is not against flesh and blood...)

challenge

Go back to the spirit of centuries past

Love & appreciate the complexity & beauty of nature (His creation)

Embrace the spirit of discovery

Be wary of interpretations, be welcome to new facts

challenge

Rekindle curiosity in yourself and your kids

Encourage young people w/ gifts in sciences to go into sciences

Let’s be a people who start a new scientific revolution

Go write a psalm!

Question 3

Why can't everyone just leave me alone. It's up to me to decide what is good and what is bad. Truth is in the eyes of the beholder. Why should I confine myself to YOUR truth. Is there such a thing as absolute truth?

Relativism:

"Relativism" is the name given to the idea that everything is relative.

It is the belief that there are no absolutes -- no absolute truth, no absolute right and wrong, in fact no absolute anything!

70% of young people believe that absolute truth does not exist and all truth is relative and personal.

"The thing is to find a truth which is true for me." Kierkegaard

"Capital T truth is dead . . . truth is plural, socially conditioned and perpetually changing." Don Culpit

Ask the first question: Is Relativism Coherent?

Does relativism cohere? That is, does it make sense, or is it logically inconsistent? Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction: a statement cannot be true and false at the same time. Complementary truth claims can be true but contradictory truth claims cannot.

In order to accept relativism, one has to abandon this fundamental principle of logic and EVERYTHING based on it.

Ergo, Relativism is Self Defeating

1: "There is no absolute truth!"

2: "Is that statement true?"

1: "Absolutely!"

2: "Then your statement cannot be absolutely true since there are no absolute truths so it must be relatively true, meaning there can be absolute truths. Am I correct?"

1: "Uh . . . absolutely?"

Ask the second question: Does Relativism Correspond with Reality?

Pralines and Cream Ice Cream is the BEST ice cream in the world!

This represents a "preference" not a truth statement.

Conditional examples: Rahab lied about the spies. But this supposes the truth that lying is wrong and she was ASKED to lie for a good cause.

There are many things true for all people at all times.

C. S. Lewis' crooked line.

Example

U: God is OK for you. He helps you because you believe in him. But, he's not for me. He doesn't exist for me, because I don't believe in him.

ME: Sorry, I'm not quite clear. Are you saying God exists for me because I believe in him, but he doesn't exist for you because you don't believe in him?

U: Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying: God exists for you, but he doesn't exist for me.

ME: I can see that's a very appealing belief, but I'm not really sure if it could be possible.

U: Why not?

ME: Well, think with me about the way the world is. Do you see that wall over there? Do you think that wall could exist for me but not exist for you, so you could walk straight through it?

U: No, of course it couldn't.

Example

ME: Do you see this floor here?

U: Yes.

ME: Do you think it could exist for me, but not exist for you, so that you fall straight through it?

U: No, of course it couldn't.

ME: Why is it, then, that you think God could exist for me but not exist for you? Isn't it the case that either God exists or he doesn't? How could he exist for me but not exist for you?

Just the Facts

We live in a world in which there are absolute truths.

This is the way the world is.

We don't create our own reality, we respond to a real world out there.

Ask the last question: Does Relativism Work?

If people took their relativism seriously and really believed that there was no such thing as absolute truth, what kind of life would they lead?

How can a professor who believes in relativism grade a paper?

How can anyone say it was wrong for Hitler to kill 6 million Jews if relativism works?

Bottom line: Even those who claim to be relativists base their lives on some absolutes.

What About Tolerance?

You Christians are so intolerant? You push your values on everyone.

Do you mean that your values should be preferred over mine? If so, I'd like to know why you have chose your values over mine? You must have a good reason. Because it seems that you are being intolerant of my intolerance.

Genuine tolerance means that we accept people as people, whatever their beliefs and their lifestyles. People have the right to disagree with us, but we still respect them.

True is True No Matter What!

Truth is true even if no one knows it.

Truth is true even if no one admits it
Truth is true even if no one agrees with it
Truth is true even if no one follows it
Truth is true even if no one but God grasps it fully

Some responses

If my belief is only true for me, then why isn't your belief only true for you? Aren't you saying you want me to believe the same thing you do?

You say that no belief is true for everyone, but you want everyone to believe what you do.

Relativism falsifies itself -- it claims there is ONE position that is TRUE -- relativism!

You're applying your view to everyone but yourself. You expect others to believe YOUR views (the self-excepting fallacy)>

Bottom Line

The notions of human respect and dignity depend on the existence of moral truth.

Without it, there is no OBLIGATION of self sacrifice on the behalf of others. Instead, we can discard people when they become troublesome or expensive, or simply when they cramp our lifestyles.

If there is no truth, nothing has transcendent value, including human beings. The death of morality reduces people to the status of mere creatures. When people are viewed as things, they begin to be treated as things.

Answers

Relativism is self-defeating and not coherent.

Relativism does not correspond to the real world in which we live.

Relativism just doesn't work for anyone, including the relativist.

Question # 4

How can I believe in an ancient book that has changed so much over the centuries and is filled with so many glaring errors?

3 Answers

The authors of the Gospels were eyewitnesses.

The transmission was reliable.

Copies of the scriptures were without significant errors.

Answer #1: The Gospel Writers Were Eyewitnesses (By Mark Riser)

WHO WERE THE WRITERS?

Two Eyewitnesses

Matthew and John

Two Writers Based Their Texts On Eyewitness Information

Mark and Luke

Internal Evidence For Authorship

“...it also seemed good to me, having carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus...” Luke 1:3

“This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.” John 21:24

WHEN DID THEY WRITE?

James was martyred in 62 A.D.

Matthew does not mention the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.).

Mark must be dated between 50 and 60 A.D.

John wrote around 95 A.D.

HOW DO WE KNOW THEY TOLD THE TRUTH?

The writers included embarrassing details about themselves.

The disciples don't get it.

Mark 9:32, Luke 18:34, John 12:16

The disciple are doubters.

Matt. 28:17

The writers included embarrassing details about Jesus.

Jesus is not believed by His own brothers.

John 7:5

Jesus is called demon-possessed.

Mark 3:22, John 7:20

Jesus is crucified on a cross.

Deut. 21:23

The writers included difficult sayings of Jesus.

Adultery is committed in the heart.

Matt. 5:28

Enemies must be dealt with in love.

Matt. 5:39-42

God's standard is perfection.

Matt. 5:48

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

1. We want writers who were as close to the events as possible.

2. We want writers who write as soon as possible.

3. The earlier the writing, the less likely that legendary material was included in the account.

Based on this evidence, we have good reasons to believe that the Gospel writers wrote truthful accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Answer #2 :The Transmission is Reliable

How do we know that what was eventually written down was the same things that Jesus said and did?

The writings were based on Oral Tradition

1: A Culture of Memorization

Relatively few people were literate even if there were widely available texts to read.

People had to memorize everything flawlessly in order to preserve their knowledge and to pass it on faithfully.

2: A Community Effort

Oral Tradition was shared in public

Oral Tradition was corrected by those who also knew the information.

3: No Secrets!

Communication was not done secretly, but openly.

Their stories about Jesus and their account of his sayings were part of the public record.

Gnostics claimed that the divine Christ had revealed secret information to a few, select disciples.

4: Jesus' Words

The early Christians also thought that Jesus' teaching was uniquely true and more important than any other ideas in the world.

Oral Tradition

The only way to accurately preserve information in the 1st Century

The Conclusion

The early followers of Jesus had both the ability and the motivation to pass on oral tradition with accuracy. The combination of context, people, content, community and process helped them to faithfully recount what Jesus did and said.

Studies show several generations can pass on information through the oral tradition without changing a thing!

Answer #3: Copies of the scriptures were without significant errors.

How do we know then, that the words written down 2000 years ago were faithfully copied and passed down to us without significant omissions or additions?

Table

Manuscript Evidence for Ancient Writings

Author	Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	#MSS
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,000 yrs	10
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,200 yrs	7
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 yrs	8
Tacitus	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1,000 yrs	20
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.	800 yrs	8
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643
New Testament	40-100 A.D.	125 A.D.	25-50 yrs	>5,000

Ancient Manuscripts

The Words of New Testament

140,000 words with only 1400 differing among all the ancient manuscripts

Of these 1400 words, NONE affect basic doctrine and are mostly punctuation and pronouns

Athanasius 367 A. D.

The Finalization of N.T. Canon

Irenaeus (150s) established the need for a list of books to combat Gnosticism

Eusebius in early 300s made first list of books in thematic order

Athanasius in 367 set forth what became the final New Testament books

J. P. Moreland's Conclusion

The New Testament documents have a staggering quantity of manuscript attestation.

Approximately 5,000 Greek manuscripts, containing all or part of the New Testament, exist. There are 8,000 manuscript copies of the Vulgate (a Latin translation of the Bible done by Jerome from 382-405) and more than 350 copies of Syriac (Christian Aramaic) versions of the New Testament (these originated from 150-250; most of the copies are

from the 400x). Besides this, virtually the entire New Testament could be reproduced from citations contained in the works of the early church fathers. There are some thirty-two thousand citations in the writings of the Fathers prior to the Council of Nicea (325).

3 Answers

The authors of the Gospels were eyewitnesses.

The transmission was reliable.

Copies of the scriptures were without significant errors.

Question 5: Evil and Suffering

Question #5:

Earthquakes, floods, wars, famines, disease -- the world is filled with evil and suffering. If there is a God, why does He allow these things to happen? Since they are happening, there must not be a God.

4 Answers

Evil PROVES God exists!

Evil PROVES God gives us free will.

Evil PROVES God has a purpose for everything, including our lives.

Evil PROVES God loves us!

1st Answer: Evil PROVES God Exists

Evil is viewed as proof there is no God.

God is all-powerful

(then can destroy evil!)

God is all-loving

(then should destroy it!)

God is all-knowing

(then knew it would happen!) so why would a God of love let people suffer???

Therefore, there is no God.

What standard?

If you argue from the existence of evil to the non-existence of God, you are assuming the existence of an absolute moral law in order for your argument to work.

But if there is such a law that would also mean that there is such a God, since He is the only one who could give us such a law.

And if there is such a God to give us this law, then the argument itself is flawed, since you have had to assume the existence of God in order to argue that He doesn't exist.

It is an attempt to invoke the existence of an absolute moral law without invoking the existence of an absolute moral law giver, and it cannot be done.

Ravi Zacharias:

Some time ago I was speaking at a university in England, when a rather exasperated person in the audience made his attack upon God.

"There cannot possibly be a God," he said, "with all the evil and suffering that exists in the world!"

I asked, "When you say there is such a thing as evil, are you not assuming that there is such a thing as good?"

"Of course," he retorted.

"But when you assume there is such a thing as good, are you not also assuming that there is such a thing as a moral law on the basis of which to distinguish between good and evil?"

"I suppose so," came the hesitant and much softer reply.

"If, then, there is a moral law," I said, "you must also posit a moral law giver. But that is who you are trying to disprove and not prove. If there is no transcendent moral law giver, there is no absolute moral law. If there is no moral law, there really is no good. If there is no good there is no evil. I am not sure what your question is!"

There was silence and then he said, "What, then, am I asking you?"

He was visibly jolted that at the heart of his question lay an assumption that contradicted his own conclusion.

You see friends, the skeptic not only has to give an answer to his or her own question, but also has to justify the question itself. And even as the laughter subsided I reminded him that his question was indeed reasonable, but that his question justified my assumption that this was a moral universe. For if God is not the author of life, neither good nor bad are meaningful terms.

This seems to constantly elude the critic who thinks that by raising the question of evil, a trap has been sprung to destroy theism. When in fact, the very raising of the question ensnares the skeptic who raised the question. A hidden assumption comes into the open. Moreover, as C. S. Lewis reminds us, the moment we acknowledge something as being "better", we are committing ourselves to an objective point of reference.

The disorienting reality to those who raise the problem of evil is that the Christian can be consistent when he or she talks about the problem of evil, while the skeptic is hard-pressed to respond to the question of good in an amoral universe. In short, the problem of evil is not solved by doing away with the existence of God; the problem of evil and suffering must be resolved while keeping God in the picture.

Answer #1:

Evil cannot exist unless there is some absolute standard of "good" for us to compare evil to.

If "good" exists, where did it come from?

We all have an inborn sense of good and evil; right and wrong -- this is the moral law.

God must exist to have created a transcendent sense of good from which we can conclude that something is evil.

2nd Answer: Evil PROVES God Gives Us Choice

Okay, so there is a God. Why in the world would God allow evil to exist?

Either he chooses not to stop evil (therefore a cruel God) or he is powerless to stop evil (therefore a weak God).

So, which is it? Why should I follow a God who is either cruel or weak?

Where did Evil Come From?

God created the fact of free choice.

Man performs the act of free choice.

Thus... God is responsible for the possibility of evil.

Man is responsible for the actuality of evil.

People are NOT Robots!

Man was sinless when God created him (Gen. 2-3).

If God had forceably prevented man from sinning, man's will would not be free.

Without free choice, love is impossible.

God is Love

God cannot force himself on anyone.

Forced love is NOT love.

Forced love is RAPE

God is NOT a Divine Rapist.

Answer #2: Evil MUST exist if we are to truly have free choice.

The outcome of a free choice MUST be either good or evil.

Therefore, Free Choice MUST include the possible consequence of evil!

God is not a divine rapist!

3rd Answer: Evil PROVES Purpose

Throughout the history of mankind, the Bible shows us one fact: God works through people.

Our "suffering" and the "evil" deeds perpetrated against us can be used by God for an ultimate good.

Joseph, Moses, and Paul are some examples

This proves that God has a purpose for each of us that requires suffering.

Suffering has a purpose:

Suffering alerts us to potentially destructive problems—physical, emotional, and spiritual (2 Cor. 7:8-13).

Suffering restrains us, keeping us from committing evil (Heb. 12:5-13).

Suffering humbles us, reminding us of our weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Suffering teaches us about ourselves, our values, our choices (Matt. 13:20-23).

Suffering teaches us about God—the magnitude of His love for us in His willingness to suffer and die in our place (Heb. 12:2).

Suffering builds perseverance, character, and hope (Rom. 5:3-4).

To the Head through the Heart

This question indicates the person is suffering.

Put aside apologetics and deal with the heart issue.

Create a relationship.

Show this person the love of Christ.

Eventually, you'll get back to answering the question!

Answer #3: Most evil can be traced back to our Choices

If we are here purely by chance, then why are you disturbed by other people's suffering? Isn't this just survival of the fittest in real life?

We are disturbed by evil, because there is something within us that wants to produce good works -- to correct this evil.

Perhaps your concerns indicate your "mission". Why don't you do something about it?

4th Answer: Evil PROVES God Loves Us

Our suffering is nothing!

As Hans Urs von Balthasar writes, "When life is hard and apparently hopeless, we can be confident that this darkness of ours can be taken up into the great darkness of redemption through which the light of Easter dawns. And when what is required of us seems too burdensome, when the pains become unbearable and the fate we are asked to accept seems simply meaningless—then we have come very close to the man nailed on the Cross at the Place of the Skull, for he has already undergone this on our behalf and, moreover, in unimaginable intensity."

Question #6

Millions and millions; possibly billions of innocent people have been killed over the past two thousand years in the name of Christianity. Why should I become a Christian and join the ranks of those who perpetrate these atrocities?

It is easy to characterize religion as a blood-thirsty enterprise. History seems to be strewn with the wreckage of witch hunts, crusades, and religious “jihad”. If God does exist, he ought to be tried for crimes against humanity! There are three examples ALWAYS brought up: The Salem Witch Trials, The Inquisition, and the Crusades.

Salem Witch Trials

The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings to prosecute people accused of witchcraft in the counties of colonial Massachusetts, between February 1692 and May 1693.

Over 150 people were arrested but only 26 were formally accused and of these nineteen were executed by hanging.

Inquisitions

Historians distinguish four different manifestations of the Inquisition:

Medieval Inquisition(1231–16th century)

Spanish Inquisition(1478–1834)

Portuguese Inquisition (1536–1821)

Roman Inquisition(1542 – c. 1860)

Deaths: García Cárcel estimates that the total number processed by the Inquisition throughout its history was approximately 150,000

It is likely that the total would be between 3,000 and 5,000 executed.

Crusades

The generally conceded number of crusades is six although some people claim that there were nine.

Total casualties were around 1,500,000.

Civilian casualties were around 1,000,000.

Military casualties were around 500,000.

Crusader military casualties were around 125,000.

Muslim military casualties were around 375,000.

Totals

Salem Witch Trials -- 26

Inquisitions -- 5000
Crusades -- 1,500,000

These are very conservative numbers, so the total amount of people killed in the name of “Christianity” in these three events is roughly 1.5 million.

20th Century Atheism

USSR -- 61,000,000 (some say as high as 100,000,000)
China -- 35,000,000
Germany -- 21,000,000
Other Regimes -- 53,000,000

Total killed by atheistic regimes in the 20th Century Alone -- 170,000,000

Answer #1

Do the Math: Just in the 20th Century alone, governments and “thought systems” whose foundation is atheism and naturalism accounted for 100 times the number of deaths as “Christian” causes for all of the last 2000 years.

Are Christians Dangerous?

Jesus said, “Many will to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.” Matthew 7:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[i] and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Matthew 5:43-47

Answer #2

One should note that “many” people will think they are Jesus’ followers. Not all who actually claim the name of Jesus are actually his disciples. Christianity should be judged on what Jesus said and did, not on the actions of merely claim to be His followers.

These actions are an indictment of the fallen nature of man, that even with the most perfect system of love and respect in the universe, man still manages to get it wrong.

The key factors in these deaths has been totalitarian power, rather than religion and religion is merely used as a tool

Ravi Zacharias -- Religion begins with man, Theology begins with God!

Blaise Pascal

Blaise Pascal (19 June 1623 – 19 August 1662), was a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Christian philosopher.

Pascal's Wager

If you believe in God only as a bet, that is certainly not a deep, mature, or adequate faith. But it is something, it is a start, it is enough to dam the tide of atheism. The Wager appeals not to a high ideal, like faith, hope, love, or proof, but to a low one: the instinct for self-preservation, the desire to be happy and not unhappy. Peter Kreeft

Pascal said . . .

Either God is, or he is not. But to which view shall we be inclined? Reason cannot decide this question. [Remember that Pascal's Wager is an argument for skeptics.] Infinite chaos separates us. At the far end of this infinite distance [death] a coin is being spun that will come down heads [God] or tails [no God]. How will you wager?

You have two things to lose: the true and the good; and two things to stake: your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to avoid: error and wretchedness.

If God does not exist, it does not matter how you wager, for there is nothing to win after death and nothing to lose after death. But if God does exist, your only chance of winning eternal happiness is to believe, and your only chance of losing it is to refuse to believe.

"I tell you that you will gain even in this life"—purpose, peace, hope, joy, the things that put smiles on the lips of martyrs.

Look at it this way . . .

Answer #3

If you live the life of a Christian, you have the fruits of the Spirit and you contribute to this world and make it a better place.

The assumption is NOT that you will be destructive or dangerous, but that you will become a loving, altruistic, effective molder of society.

Summary

More people have been killed in the name of atheism than Christianity.

"Many" who claim to be Christians do not represent Christ.

It is worth living the Christian life because you can have a positive impact on the world.

Resources for Bruce Hennigan's Presentation:
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) From the Faithless

My website: www.brucehennigan.com and look under "Apologetics" tab for a pdf of this list. You can load the pdf on your computer and then click directly on the website addresses.

Question #1: How Can I Know God Exists:

"On Guard" by William Lane Craig

"Creator and the Cosmos" and "Why the Universe is the Way it Is" by Hugh Ross

"Without a Doubt" by Kenneth Samples

"Mere Christianity" by C. S. Lewis

"Creation and Evolution 101" by Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz

"The Case for Faith" by Lee Strobel

Websites:

www.reasonablefaith.org -- William Lane Craig

www.reasons.org -- Reasons to Believe

www.godandscience.org

www.swordandspirit.com

www.leestrobel.com

Question #2: Faith and Science Reconciled

"On Guard" by William Lane Craig

"Creator and the Cosmos" and "Why the Universe is the Way it Is" by Hugh Ross

"Without a Doubt" by Kenneth Samples

"Mere Christianity" by C. S. Lewis

“The Case for a Creator” by Lee Strobel

“Creation and Evolution 101” by Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz

Websites:

www.reasonablefaith.org -- William Lane Craig

www.reasons.org -- Reasons to Believe

www.godandscience.org

www.swordandspirit.com

www.leestrobel.com

Question #3: The Truth About Truth

“On Guard” by William Lane Craig

“Without a Doubt” by Kenneth Samples

“Mere Christianity” by C. S. Lewis

“Light in the Shadow of Jihad: The Struggle for Truth” by Ravi Zacharias

“Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions” by Gregory Koukl

“Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air” by Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl

“True for You, But Not For Me” by Paul Copan

“When God Goes to Starbucks” by Paul Copan

“How to Know You’re Not Wrong” by Paul Copan

“World of Difference” by Kenneth Samples

Websites:

www.reasonablefaith.org -- William Lane Craig

www.reasons.org -- Reasons to Believe

www.str.org -- Stands to Reason

www.rzim.org -- Ravi Zacharias

Question #4: The Reliability of the Bible

“On Guard” by William Lane Craig

“Without a Doubt” and “A World of Difference” by Kenneth Samples
“The Case for Faith” and “The Case for Christ” by Lee Strobel

Websites:

www.reasonablefaith.org -- William Lane Craig
www.reasons.org -- Reasons to Believe
www.risenjesus.com -- Mike Licona’s website
www.4truth.net -- SBC/NAMB website
www.bethinking.com -- Good General Apologetics Website
www.str.org -- Stands to Reason
www.leestrobel.com

Question #5: Evil and Suffering

“Deliver Us From Evil” and “The Grand Weaver” by Ravi Zacharias
“The Problem of Pain” by C. S. Lewis
“Surprised by Joy” by C. S. Lewis
“On Guard” by William Lane Craig
“Without a Doubt” and “A World of Difference” by Kenneth Samples

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www.reasonablefaith.org -- William Lane Craig
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www.risenjesus.com -- Mike Licona’s website
www.4truth.net -- SBC/NAMB website
www.bethinking.com -- Good General Apologetics Website
www.str.org -- Stands to Reason
www.leestrobel.com

Question #6: Is Christianity Dangerous?

“Has Christianity Failed You?” by Ravi Zacharias
“On Guard” by William Lane Craig
“Without a Doubt” and “A World of Difference” by Kenneth Samples

“Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions” by Gregory Koukl

“Is God a Moral Monster” by Paul Copan

Websites:

www.reasonablefaith.org -- William Lane Craig

www.reasons.org -- Reasons to Believe

www.risenjesus.com -- Mike Licona’s website

www.4truth.net -- SBC/NAMB website

www.bethinking.com -- Good General Apologetics Website

www.str.org -- Stands to Reason

www.leestrobels.com

General Apologetic Websites:

www.thepoachedegg.net

www.crossexamined.org -- Website of Frank Turek co-author of “I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist”

www.oneminuteapologist.com one minute videos on apologetics featuring most of the apologists mentioned above.

DVD Series from

www.trueu.org

Does God Exist?

Is the Bible Reliable?

Podcasts:

Reasons to Believe:

Straight Thinking with Kenneth Samples

I Didn’t Know That with all the scholars

Science News Flash -- Christian perspectives on latest scientific discoveries

Ravi Zacharias

Let My People Think
Just Thinking

William Lane Craig
Reasonable Faith

Apologetics 315 Interviews -- Interviews apologists
Cross Examined

