

## **Study Guide for “Lesson on Does God Exist?”**

To be used along with the video of the same name on [www.ChristianfromMuslim.com](http://www.ChristianfromMuslim.com) and YouTube channel

*Note: The existence of God is a topic with much important information to cover. As a result, this study guide is long. Your study group leader might want to assign only certain portions of it, and reduce the number of study questions discussed. Alternately, it could be used over several sessions.*

### **Summary and Notes:**

Quick summary: During our lives we must ask ourselves three questions:

***Where did I come from?***

***Why am I here?***

***Where will I go when I die?***

In this lesson we address the foundation of these three questions, “Does God Exist?” Atheism and skepticism are growing in Islamic countries, as they are in the West. In this lesson we examine the thinking and reasons behind Muslim atheism. In addition, we make suggestions to help Muslims and all atheists reconsider – God exists, but is different and far better than they had ever thought!

(Note: see also the study guide and “Lesson on *Why Believe the Bible?*”)

#### Important words:

Theist – believes God exists

Atheist – does not believe God exists

Skeptic – doubts that God exists; much like atheist

Agnostic – not sure about any religion; often like atheist

Monotheism – the belief in one God

### **Reality – Mammoth Site, South Dakota**

Dr. Cynthia introduces us to the fascinating Mammoth Site in South Dakota. Here we find elephant-like creatures that are long extinct. It is not a graveyard where the mammoths buried their dead, but is a place of doom.

The story goes back thousands of years, to when South Dakota’s environment was much different than now. The climate was milder, and fertile enough to support mammoths. Large and well-fed, the mammoths became thirsty. They searched for water and found it –murky water, but better than nothing. Or so they thought.

What the mammoths didn’t know was that under the water lay a base of sucking mud. Desperate to satisfy their thirst, the mammoths went deeper and deeper into the dirty water. That meant deeper and deeper into hungry mud which held them tight. Frantic, they tried to escape. What good was a drink if they died?

Exactly what happened next, we don’t know for certain: did they quickly sink and suffocate, or stay stuck and crying out for days? Either way, dozens were trapped until they died.

Dr. C uses this sad story to point out that people also need water – spiritually as well as physically. Jesus tells us in John 4 that he gives **living water** – the kind that satisfies our souls. This living water is for everyone, yet as we look around, we see most people drinking from muddy puddles – meaning pursuits that promise satisfaction but don’t deliver. Muddy puddles will not satisfy our longings. And if we follow them too far, they can suck away our very life.

An ancient site like this also makes us wonder about what happened long before we were born. How was the earth formed? How long it has existed? What about other extinct animals?

Being of a scientific background, Dr. C the is very interested in **age of the earth** and its creatures, and the way God brought them into existence. It is a fascinating topic. She has opinions about it. But Dr. C respects Christians who have different views, and encourages everyone to do the same.

### **The Bible and the Qur'an on Creation**

*Muslims and Christians usually agree on issues about creation, and whether or not God exists.*

There is much agreement between the Bible and the Qur'an on the topic of creation. It is nice that there are some beliefs that we can share with our Muslim friends and family. For example, some parts of the Qur'an that describe nature, sound like the Book of Psalms in the Bible (*zabur*).

Both the Bible and the Qur'an say that God created the heavens and earth in six days. Many people believe God used 24 hour days. The word for day, *yom*, is the same in both ancient Hebrew and Arabic.

Ancient Hebrew only had 3,000 words, which meant words often had more than one meaning. Some people interpret *yom* in the Bible and the Qur'an to mean that the days were time periods, rather than 24 hour days. You can hold either the short or long day view and be a true Christian or Muslim.

The main issue is not WHEN the universe was created, but WHO or WHAT created it. None of us were alive at the time of the origin of the universe and life. So, to look back in time, we must:

1. examine the evidence that still remains, then
2. try to interpret it. Naturally, there will be different interpretations of the findings.

We believe it is **important not to be dogmatic about the beginning or end of the earth** in terms of timing, or the mechanisms God used to create.

It is good to be convinced ourselves, and fine to have friendly discussions within the body of believers. But we should not demand that everyone share our view. Rather, we should focus more on sharing the gospel in word and deed. That is what Jesus told us to do. We must not let “friendly fire” derail our main calling – to make disciples of all nations.

**The Main Thing is to Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing –**  
sharing God's plan for our salvation in word and deed.

You might hear that the **Qur'an gives contradictory accounts** of creation. That is because in Qur'an 41:9-12, if you add up the days you get eight, not six. But in multiple other places the Qur'an says six. Some non-Muslims are critical of this seeming contradiction.

Muslim apologists however, explain that some of the days described in surah 41 overlap. We give Muslims the **benefit of the doubt**, and accept this explanation. After all, there are some Biblical passages that need explanation. There are other passages that we disagree on in the Qur'an that are more important to discuss with them.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an point to **creation as a sign of encouragement that God exists** (Psalm 8 & 19, Romans 1; Qur'an 2:164). This is another area in which we agree, as we do on most of the material in this lesson.

## Many Muslims are Becoming Atheists

Muslims are told not to ask questions if it would cause them to doubt (Qur'an 5:101,102). Yet some do. As Muslims begin to question Islam, which has been taught to them as undeniably true from birth, they start to question everything else that they had thought was true. Often, they go from questioning Islam, to disbelieving Islam, to disbelieving in God.

For example, a BBC South Asia interviewer asked Dr. Cynthia,

*“Since you are saying that the Qur’an, the last revelation of God is corrupted: does that mean that there is no God?”*

At first Dr. C was surprised at his jump to this conclusion. But thinking it over, she saw how clearly it reflects Islamic thinking. To Muslims, the very existence of God is so strongly linked to their view of Mohammed and the Qur’an, that it is a package deal. If one part is wrong, perhaps it is all wrong.

Mercifully, some do go back to believing in God – a different kind of God – and Christianity.

(Note: In order to keep the lesson focused on Islam, we have moved other causes of atheism to Appendix 3, the end of the study guide.)

## Atheism in a nutshell

Modern atheists tend to believe:

- **natural processes** alone are enough to explain the origin of the universe and life, also called “scientific materialism.
- the **Theory of Evolution** accounts for the development and diversity of life on earth, by mutation and natural selection
- the **physical** world is all that exists

Some go beyond these beliefs to become anti-theist, saying:

- their view is the only one with evidence
- no one intelligent believes in God
- God-believers are superstitious because they claim a “God of the gaps” for anything not explained; but some day science will explain
- people who believe in God are judgmental
- religion is the cause of most of the problems in the world
- if God does exist, he is an evil dictator that you can’t even escape by dying

Many go beyond even those with aggressive behaviors:

- ridiculing students and other theists
- forbidding education to even mention Intelligent Design as an option
- removing university professors who admit to believing in God
- trying to remove social networking and other platforms from theists so that they cannot express their views

## Ways to Consider the Existence of God

We will consider 3 types of proof that God exists:

**Philosophical**

**Scientific**

**Subjective** (meaning with personal experience, insight, or feelings)

### Philosophical Arguments for the Existence of God: using LOGIC

Guest Luke Price makes a very simple presentation of **what logic is**. Then, he presents his **four favorite arguments for the existence of God. They are:**

1. **The Beginning of the Universe**
2. **The Complexity of the Universe**
3. **The Origin of Life**
4. **Consciousness**

### Learning Easy LOGIC

Before we examine Price's favorite four, let's look at how to form a logical "argument." This way of organized thinking, Price explains, goes back to ancient Greece.

An argument in this sense does not mean fighting. It means an orderly presentation of statements which are called "premises." Each of the statements presented must be true. If true, the premises lead to an unavoidable conclusion.

### The Logical ARGUMENT:

**Premise 1**

**Premise 2** \_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion: based on the Premises**

The only way to avoid the conclusion is to disprove one of the premises.

Presenting the case for God to Muslims is similar to how we explain the existence of God to any agnostic or atheist. We present truth and pray for God's Spirit to confirm it and convict them.

(**Note: Islam uses circular reasoning**, which is different than logic. For example,

*"The Qur'an is God's word because Prophet Mohammed says so.  
Mohammed is a prophet because the Qur'an says so."*

Using one thing to prove the other and vice versa is not considered logic. But if you were raised with it, it is probably convincing.

Jesus did not use circular reasoning. In John 5, Jesus told us if he testifies for himself (as Mohammed did) it is not valid. He then gave three outside reasons, to back up his claim.

(Note: See also the study guide and *Lesson on What Makes a True Prophet?*)

**Example: using logic with Muslims** Dr. C had the opportunity to tutor a strict Muslim in Critical Thinking and Rhetoric. After these two courses, she encouraged the student to apply this way of thinking to religion, not simply to accept Islam’s claims. She is still praying for a result.)

## **Price’s Favorite Four Arguments**

### **1. Argument #1 The BEGINNING of the Universe**

#### **The Cosmological Argument**

Premise 1: Anything that begins to exist has a cause

Premise 2: The universe began to exist

**Conclusion: Therefore the Universe has a Cause**

This argument is one of a family of arguments for God called “cosmological.” meaning related to the universe, or cosmos. Some of our Muslim friends might recognize it as the “*Kalam*,” which originated in the Middle Ages by a Muslim trained in logic.

#### **The Universe had a Beginning.**

**Among world religions, only the Bible and Qur’an claim that the universe began.**

- This significantly points toward which religion is true: Judaism, Islam, or Christianity.
- For thousands of years there was no proof of whether the universe was eternal or began. Religions could teach whatever they chose about the beginning of the universe, without fear of being proven wrong.
- All that changed in the 1920s when high powered telescopes became able to look into deep space and discover that the stars and galaxies are moving apart. This means that at one point back in time everything was all together, until a “Big Bang” explosion blew it apart.

*In other words, **the universe began.***

**Eastern religions**, like Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, and New Age are becoming popular alternatives to monotheism. But they hold significant problems with logic and truth, because they:

- teach an **eternal universe**, which does not fit the facts.
- believe in **pantheism**, that god is inside creation, as “the coexistence of god and matter.” This belief does not provide a force or god outside of the universe to create it.
  - **God needs to exist outside of the creation to create it.**
  - *Nothing* cannot create *something*
  - God cannot create himself out of nothing.

The Bible is not a science textbook. However, it does clearly say that the universe had a beginning, and God “spread it out.” Both claims fit with the evidence of science. (Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 42:5)

## 2. Argument # 2 The COMPLEXITY of the Universe

### The Design Argument

Premise 1: Design is evidence of a Mind

Premise 2: The Universe shows evidence of Design

**Conclusion: Therefore the Universe was Designed by a Mind**

Logical arguments about complexity suggesting design of the universe are called “Teleological Arguments.” *Intelligent Design* is the name some scientists use to explain that the evidence of design in the universe shows that designer a was at work.

**A. Fine tuning of the Universe.** The complexity of the universe becomes more and more clear as science understands it better.

For example, the evidence of:

- design in the cosmos
  - variations in the background radiation of the universe are even called “the fingerprints of God”
- the fine-tuning of the universe required for life on earth

**Life** only can exist under narrow conditions. Our amazing universe is so finely tuned for life on earth that it is impossible to ignore.

**Position, physical laws, and constants:** In the last 100 years we have discovered many physical laws and constants which must be exactly right for life to exist. A common one you know is gravity. **Gravity** must be just right – not too much or too little. Besides constants, there are many other things which **must be precisely right** for life to exist. For example, the **sun** must be just the right kind of star at the right phase of its life, set in the right spot of the universe with a planet at just the right distance away to support life.

**B. The Complexity of Life** is appearing less and less random as we learn more about:

- DNA coding of the cell’s genetics
- intracellular information processing
  - how the cell knows to use DNA for growth, etc.
- intracellular micromachines
- the limits of mutation and natural selection

Considering this, in the video lesson Luke Price says,

*“Personally, I find the level of complexity that is present in nature is very difficult to explain if you are only appealing to evolution, naturalistic processes, and random chance.”*

He tells us that these process can explain a lot, like the diversity of dog breeds, but not the complexity of genetic diversity. Astounded by this genetic diversity, some atheist scientists become theists because:

**The complexity of information coded in the cell is fast becoming the greatest evidence of Intelligent Design.**

### Example of Complexity without Meaning: Granite

Dr. C likes the analogy of patterns in granite rock. Granite counters are popular now. Perhaps you have seen some, or even have one in your kitchen or bathroom. The complexity of the patterns is immense: the colors, size, and placement of the minerals forming dots, lines and patterns seems endless. The chance of any slab of granite with exactly that pattern is exceedingly rare. Yet, its random pattern has no significance.

Consider life: not only is it exceedingly rare that any particular combination of information would exist, but the chance that it would encode **meaningful information** – as DNA and RNA do – is so remote as to be unreal. Computer engineers say the detail in the genetic code reminds them of complex computer coding that **could in no way be random**.

### Example of Complexity with Meaning: Literature

In the video Luke gives us an example of random chance versus information with meaning. Imagine monkeys pushing keys for 6 billion letters on a typewriter at random. The chance of any particular sequence is remote. However, for the 6 billion letters to create the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare at random, is laughably unlikely.

### Advances in Science reveal complexity

During the days of Darwin, who presented the Theory of Evolution in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, science was much simpler than today. Telescopes and microscopes were less powerful. Biochemistry was basic. Guesses about how living things worked seemed adequate.

In the decades following Darwin, **major scientific advancements and discoveries** were made. Now we look far into space through high powered telescopes. We peer deep into cells to see teeny, but advanced, machines and processes. By sequencing the amazing complexity of DNA we discover: where our characteristics come from, how humans are related, our susceptibility for diseases, and even where our ancestors lived.

Attempting to explain how all this complexity could arise without God, scientists came up with the following explanations:

#### C. Atheistic Explanations of Complexity

1. **Only Appearance of Design.** Atheists are willing to accept all the evidence of design as appearing to be design, yet still consider it only chance.

If you or I found a **watch on the ground** in the desert, regardless of our religion or philosophy we would know that it didn't come from the dirt. Someone had made it. We would know that it had been left there, probably on accident, and we might try even to find the owner.

Atheists however, must look at the universe, which is far more complex than a watch, and say that it was only chance. Atheist Richard Dawkins in his book, The Blind Watchmaker says,

*“Biology is the study of complicated things that give the **appearance of being designed** for a purpose...the living results... overwhelmingly impress us with the **illusion of design and planning.**”* (p. 1 & 21)

Yet consider what Dr. C calls **The Flint Inconsistency**, with its simplest recognized evidence of design:

- **Early Tools:** Before metals were developed, people used stone tools. Flint is a strong stone that early humans chipped, or knapped, to make a sharp edge for knives and axes.

Although you and I might overlook a flint with a chip as nothing – merely time and chance acting on stone – the scientists which study early humans (anthropologists and archaeologists) would not. To them, even a tiny piece of flint with **chips is evidence of design** – the action of human beings.

Yet the complex universe as a whole these scientists believe was the result of chance, not design.

- **Notice their inconsistency?** Scientists should be consistent. But atheist scientists are not. In one case they accept the tiniest evidence. Yet in the other they overlook an abundance. It’s like the expression, “They can’t see the forest for the trees.” Or as Jesus said in Matthew 23:24,

*“You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”*

2. The **multiverse hypothesis** tries to get around the fine tuning of earth for life. It proposes that there are unlimited universes, of which ours is only one; the others aren’t tuned to support life.

The multiverse hypothesis is supposedly scientific, but has little scientific basis. They simply guess at how the constants of the universe could be set as they are without God being involved. They nod to quantum mechanics to say that these multiverses could have originated out of nothing. Yet, when you ask them what nothing is, the nothing of quantum mechanics it is not really “nothing.”

3. The **simulation hypothesis** sounds like a strange marriage of computer science, Hollywood, and video games. Yet it is a serious hypothesis, gaining in popularity. In this idea, all of us are in a computer simulation of life. Not real. We simply think we are.

### **Are these 3 explanations adequate to explain the complexity?**

**We do not think that these atheistic explanations adequately account for the complexity of the universe and life.**

Considering the weight of the evidence theists have, and how much the multiverse and simulation theories sound like fairy tales, believing in God is even easier!

As Dr. C says, “When you get to the beginning of the universe, and the origin of life, **both theists and atheists alike must rely metaphysical explanations**,” meaning beyond physics – explanations that we can think of, but cannot prove.

To theists, **believing in God is more sensible** than the unprovable, atheistic theories of the origin and complexity of the universe.

### **3. Argument #3 The ORIGIN of Life**

Besides explaining how things came into existence, another big hurdle is the explanation of how life began. This is not so much in terms of an argument of logic, as scientific explanation.

#### **Three Huge Hurdles for Atheists:**

- **Out of Time**



Because they reproduce quickly, the mutation rates of bacteria have been studied for the past several decades. In fact more than 50,000 generations have passed – a number we could not dream of observing with animals. The mutation rate and types of mutations have been documented. Most mutations are negative, not constructive, and would not lead toward evolutionary development.

It is estimated that there are over 8 million species on earth, of which we have identified over 1 million. Whether you believe life on earth began 6,000 years ago or 3 billion years, there is simply not enough time for mutation and natural selection to develop this many species.

- **More against Less**

The tendency of all things is to become less complicated, rather than more complicated over time. We see this in situations from everyday life, for example an untended garden, as well as in physics with The Second Law of Thermodynamics.

This tendency goes against the atheistic evolution. In science, a law is something that is always true. If a theory contradicts a law, the theory is usually wrong.

- **Right or Left Turn**

You might have heard that the building blocks of life were made in a laboratory over 50 years ago. What you did not hear is that they were very simple compounds which lasted only brief seconds. They were unstable. They were formed in a special environment very different than that of early earth. Plus, they were a mixture of right hand and left hand orientation.

Did you know **chemicals are oriented right or left, like hands**? Proteins are made of parts that must all line up left (*levorotatory*). Even if we had a mixture on early earth of the chemical building blocks of life in precisely the right environment, their connections would be at random. We would not have all the right and all the left-oriented chemicals attaching to each other unless an outside force assisted them.

**Example of Orientation: hand in glove.** Our right and left hands are different. Our thumbs are on the different sides of the fingers. As you remember if you have worn a glove for work or in cold weather, right and left gloves are different. You simply can't make one work for the other.

Imagine that you have ten sets of wet gloves. You put them into the dryer and spin them for an hour. After an hour, you open the door. Do you expect to see all of the right hand gloves lined up on the right side of the dryer and all of the left hand gloves lined up on the left? No! What if you kept spinning them for 2 hours? 5 hours? a day? 10,000 years? 1,000,000 years?

I think we agree that no matter how long we spin the gloves, **without outside assistance they will always distribute at random**, not in an organized pattern. And yet, this example is extremely simplified compared to the number and complexity of chemicals needed to create life.

**Atheists Propose Panspermia** to try to get around there not being enough time for life to have evolved on earth. It proposes that the earth was seeded with life from outer space. Very few people would take seriously the idea that aliens visited earth and planted life here. But, perhaps a meteor carried elements of life, they claim.

Panspermia is extremely unlikely. Other planets in our solar system cannot sustain life. As for planets beyond our solar system, the distance to the nearest star makes it unlikely that living material would make it from there.

**Panspermia's Problem:** Even if this were possible and did happen, it would not really help. Why? Because **you would still need to explain how life began on the planet of its origin.** You would only be knocking the ball into a different court, but it would still be a ball.

#### 4. **Argument #4 CONSCIOUSNESS**

Assuming that there were reasonable explanations for the origin of the universe, its complexity, and the origin of life, we still have to explain the miracle of human consciousness.

Luke tells us that consciousness is the part of us that we alone have access to. That means it is *subjective*.

#### **Objective and Subjective**

**Objective** evidence means factual, not related to how someone feels.

**Subjective** means opinion or the way something feels to a person, not the facts.

When we die, all of our physical parts are still there, but something is missing Luke tells us, our soul or spirit. It is the essential part of who we are – our pain, loves, and emotions.

Where would these come from if not from a mind? **It takes a mind to create a mind.** That creator would be God.

Consciousness is not merely a sense of right and wrong (discussed in “The Moral Argument”), but the fact that humans have a **special sense of awareness** of who they are, the situation they are in, their mortality, and wonder about the meaning of the universe. Bible-believers consider it related to our creation in the *Image of God*:

*“So God created human beings **in his own image.**  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.”*  
Genesis 1:27 (NLT)

*“He has also set eternity in the human heart  
yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”*  
Ecclesiastes 3:11

So we have a Biblical explanation that at the time of their creation, God did something special with human beings, different from the rest of creation. The Image of God is not clearly defined, but in general, it is thought to mean:

- **Resemblance** to God
- **Representative** of God on earth
- and/or have **Relationship** with God

**Resemblance:** Characteristics of Image-bearers which give us resemblance to God are:

**Creative      Moral      Rational      Spiritual      Relational**

The first four of these characteristics require the use of symbols and **abstract thinking**, which are considered distinctive of human beings.

If you have seen nature documentaries you will know that chimpanzees and gorillas show many human-like behaviors. That is not what makes them in the image of God.

**Don't be distressed** if someone points to characteristics that seem human in apes or hominids (extinct creatures with features between humans and apes). Many characteristics that we think of as human, can also be seen in other animals.

Some animals have special capacities. They have been called “**soulish animals.**” Soulish animals can show affection to each other and humans, mourn their dead, learn behaviors, and use tools. It is as if they were specially created to comfort humans, or assist them with specific functions, like herding animals or detecting drugs. But they do not have the special relationship with God that we do.

### **Representative: of God on Earth**

As God's representatives, the Bible says we are to be **stewards of the earth.** We are to tend the land and its animals well. We honor and care for creation. (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 8:6-8, Proverbs 12:10) At the same time, as believers we know that there is a special **quality about human beings which we should honor** above other animals. Not all philosophies recognize this.

### **Relationship: God's Family**

Only human beings can have a special, family relationship with God. (John 1:12)

### **Two Other Arguments for God**

Besides Price's Big Four arguments for God, there are other philosophical and scientific arguments. Probably every believer has their favorites. You might have heard of some of these, or perhaps others. (Note: Feel free to share your favorites on the comments section of our video.)

#### **5. The “God Gene”**

Related to the Consciousness Argument is the idea that most people have a sense of there being a God. This trait is so deeply associated with humans, that those studying ancient humans (anthropologists), consider worship of a greater power a distinctly human trait.

### **Subjective Experience**

In his Letter to Huda at the end of this lesson, Georges Housney quotes French philosopher Pascal who describes a **God-shaped hole in each heart** which can only be filled by God. We try to fill it with human love, activities, money, position, or possessions – but they don't satisfy.

#### **If we focus on:**

- circumstances, we will fear
- people, we will be angry
- things, we will be disappointed
- God and his Word we will have hope, abundant life, love, joy, and peace (John 10:10 & Romans 14:27)

Most people go through life either **feeling, or trying to suppress the feeling that:**

- there is something or someone greater than me
- I exist in a greater capacity than my body expresses
- things are not right in the world, and something should be done about it
- all this glory of nature surely can't have come from nothing
- a loving God gives me peace

Your **personal testimony** of how Jesus saved you and the Holy Spirit entered your life is part of your subjective experience. Because subjective experiences are only experienced by you, they are not objective. Other people can't reason it out objectively like they can other arguments. Atheists will tend to disregard it as emotionalism. So, in discussion with atheists for we don't find this a top way to prove that God exists. (See Appendix 4 on the Personal Apologetic Testimony)

However, Dr. C agrees with Christian philosopher and debater William Lane Craig, that one's personal experience can be a valid proof to themselves. And sometimes, when other's see the love and power of God acted out in your life, it touches them too. So, Dr. C often likes to end a discussion with a personal note, for Jesus told us to use spirit and truth in our worship of God. (John 4:24)

**Not everyone has a sense that God exists.** A famous mountaineer fell down an ice crevasse, and thought he would die. At his life or death moment, he says, he had no sense of God. But then, he had been atheist for a very long time.

***Does it mean there is no God if we can't sense him?***

That God is imagined? Or perhaps that he only exists for those who believe in him?

As noted Craig has said, we don't have a sense organ for everything. Things like ultrasonic sound, radiation, and math exist, but we can't sense them like we can light and sound. What about diseases? So many, like infections and cancer can only be seen with a microscope.

We must use more than our 5 senses to determine if God is real. We must use our "**capacity for reason,**" which some philosophers go so far as to call our "sense organ for God."

## **6. The Moral Argument**

The idea that people everywhere have a sense of right and wrong is a favorite proof to many people that there is a God. If there is no God, they say, there would be no reason for this sense, because without God there is no real right and wrong. This is not a favorite of Luke and Dr. C, because the sense of right and wrong is deeply tied to cultural values.

(Note: For a fuller discussion of The Moral Argument, see *Study Guide and Lesson on Godly Relationships*.)

## **In Conclusion, God is the Best Fit**

As you can see from the six above arguments for God, an **outside force is necessary** to:

- create something from nothing
- design complex and information rich systems
- create life from dead chemicals
- create a mind with consciousness, morality, and a sense of God

It is not possible to 100% prove some things. For example something that happened in the past or will happen in the future. What we accept if we are using reason, is the best fit of the facts that we have. Words that debaters might use are “plausible” or “potentially valid.”

The existence of **God is the best fit for the scientific and philosophical evidence** we have. As one former atheist said after his conversion,

*“The evidence for God is strong, clear, and convincing.  
The evidence against God is weak, vague, and dubious.”*

Dr. Cynthia, a medical doctor who has done research and taught medicine, believes science and logic fit better with the existence of God than atheism. She is not alone in this. Besides believing physicians, Ph.D. scientists are starting to leave atheism because of the weight of evidence favoring God. This doesn’t mean that scientists support the Bible, or that all discoveries fit neatly into a Christian world view. But,

***when we look at the facts overall, they fit best with the world view of theism: there is a God.***

**The “Other Fields Fit Better” Defense.** When faced with these facts, how can scientists continue to be atheists? They say something like, “Yes, there are problems in [my field], but the other fields fit well with naturalistic causes only.” But the other fields don’t. Every field of science faces significant challenges and unlikelihood in explaining everything with natural processes and no help from outside nature.

**Atheists have a lot to answer for.** Objective evidence that fits best with a God must be explained by them in a powerful way. There are **many things which are difficult to explain in the absence of God**, regardless of how hard atheists try to smooth things over.

Deeper scientific details are beyond the scope of this lesson. For more information on how science fits with the Bible, see sites such as: [www.discovery.org](http://www.discovery.org), or [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org). For more information on philosophical approaches to theism, see [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org).

(Note: Additional information for this lesson can be found in Appendix 1 – Appendix 4, after the study questions. We think it is important information, but do not want to lengthen the lesson. The topics are: *How to Follow Science without Being Tricked*, *Stumbling Blocks to Believing in God*, *Causes of Atheism*, and *Developing a Personal Apologetic Testimony*.)

**In summary**, there are many things about the universe and human experience that fit best with there being a God. **God is the best fit solution** for the objective scientific information, and for the subjective experiences and needs of the human heart and soul.

### **Reality: Driving into the Smog**

On a road trip, former Muslim Huda and Dr. C drive down the mountains north of Los Angeles, California. As they descend, it becomes clear that they are entering impure air – the notorious smog of Southern California.

Dr. C uses this as an illustration of how we can live surrounded by something we do not notice. We get used to what is in our culture, without always identifying if it is good or bad. The kinds of sins the people of Los Angeles get used to living in might be different than those of Islamic countries.

**Example of seeming clean: a white railing.** In the video lesson, Dr. C used the illustration of washing the white railing of her veranda. It looked clean, but when water was sprayed on it, it became clear that it was actually dirty. That's the way it is when Jesus' living water comes into our life. We see how far short of perfection we fall, and long for pure, refreshing, living water. (John 7:38)

### **Letter to Huda: from Georges Housney**

In this part of the video lesson, Georges encourages Huda to seek a life close to Jesus, rather than a happy life. True happiness, he says, comes only from Jesus. If she gets deeper into Jesus, and fully relies on him, her life will be its best.

He refers to these Bible verses:

- Jesus is the way, truth, and life. (John 14:6)
- Seek God's kingdom first, and everything important will fall into place. (Matthew 6:33)
- If we seek to make a great life, we will end up losing it; but if we give our life Jesus, we will find it. (Matthew 10:39)

And as Jesus did, Georges gives us several **metaphors**, or word pictures:

- We might become thirsty enough to drink salty **water**, but it will not satisfy.
- The bread that Jesus gives satisfies. It is the **bread** of life.
- Georges puts together **puzzles** with his grandchildren. If a piece is missing, the picture is not complete. As in our discussion above that most people have a sense that God exists, Georges reminds us that **only God** can fill the hole in our heart – he is the missing piece of the puzzle.

“Don't be distracted by the world,” he says, “Seek Truth.”

### **Scripture References:**

II Corinthians 5:17

John 5

Romans 1

Psalm 8 & 19

Genesis 1:1,27, 28

Isaiah 42:5

Ecclesiastes 3:11

John 1:12

Psalm 8:5-8

Proverbs 12:10

John 10:10 & 4:24

Romans 14:27 & 8:28

Psalm 118:1

John 1:3

Colossians 1:16

John 7:38 & 14:6

Matthew 6:33 & 10:39

Ecclesiastes 9:11

Job 23 & 38 & 40-42

Luke 13:4

Romans 8:28, & 8:15-17

John 16:33  
Genesis 6:4  
Hebrews 12:2,3  
Isaiah 63:9 & 61:8  
Galatians 3:28  
I Peter 3:15

Qur'an References:

Creation: 6 days of creation – 10:3, 11:7, 25:59, 32:4, 50:38, & 57:4  
8 days described for creation 41:9-12  
as signs of God – 2:164

**Study Questions:**

1. Why are Muslims becoming atheists?
  - Does it make sense to you?
  - Why do you think non-Muslims become atheists? (see Appendix 3)
2. Review the steps of a logical argument.
  - What is a “premise?”
  - Why do you think it is important to know how to make a logical argument?
2. This lesson contains some words which are new for most people.
  - Practice saying these words:
    - Theist and atheist
    - Cosmological
    - Kalam
    - Teleological
    - Objective and subjective
  - Define them if you can.
3. Review four of the following arguments for the existence of God:
  - Cosmological (origin of the universe)
  - Teleological (complexity of the universe and life)
  - Origin of Life
  - Consciousness
  - Moral
  - God gene
  - Subjective experience
  - A casual, “There’s just too much to explain without God” argument
    - Which four of the above arguments does Luke Price think are the best?
    - Which four do you prefer?
4. Regarding the **beginning of the universe** and its age: In the video lesson, Dr. C emphasizes the importance for Christians to agree on the arguments that support the existence of God, **rather than argue** with each other about details like the time involved to create the universe.
  - Were you present at the beginning of the universe? (Job 38)
  - What **neutral point** does Dr. C say that we can make about the age of the earth and its creatures, that Christians can agree on without arguing?

- How do you feel Christians should **balance** Christian unity with **their different views** of creation, for example if the days of creation are 24 hours, eras, or allegorical?
  - Which is more important to you:
    - winning the lost to Christ?
    - convincing others, that the world was created the way you think it was?
  - What does it mean to “keep the main thing the main thing?”
5. Review how these religions/philosophies explain the origin of the universe and life:
- Islam
  - Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism
  - Scientific materialism (common atheism)
  - any other that you know
  - Christianity and Judaism
6. Regarding the **complexity** of the cosmos and nature:
- Give examples that you think go against naturalistic processes.
  - For an illustration that you can use with your friends, do you find the granite, or monkeys on a typewriter examples helpful?
  - Can you think of examples of complexity with meaning and without meaning?
7. What are some obstacles that must be overcome for **life on earth to originate**?
- Have scientists ever been able to create real life in the laboratory?
  - Do you feel you have been told the truth about this by your teachers and the media?
  - Did you learn anything new/different about it in this lesson?
  - Do you like the illustration of gloves in a dryer?
8. Review some **arguments that atheists propose** to explain away the need for God, that Luke’s top 4 arguments support?
- Have you heard these before?
  - On the surface, do they sound reasonable to you?
  - Do you think they are more likely explanations than the existence of God?
9. Regarding **Consciousness**: Since atheists only accept material, naturalistic processes, they have trouble explaining human consciousness.
- How would you explain human consciousness?
  - How do you think it might relate to the “image of God?”
  - What other things do you think are difficult to explain by naturalistic processes alone?
10. **Do you believe God exists?**
- Why or why not? List the **objective** reasons.
  - If not, what would it take to convince you that God does exist?
11. If you are an **atheist or skeptic**:
- Is there a **subjective** component to your lack of belief in God? For example:
    - Could you be disappointed with God over something?
    - Are you struggling with the problem of evil and pain in the world?
    - Could you be letting negative feelings influence your consideration of whether or not God exists?



- Are there activities that you enjoy which you fear you would have to give up if you believe in God?
  - What do you think are the **best arguments** for the existence of God? Ones that make you think?
12. Georges Housney says that **God is the missing piece** in the puzzle of our lives.
- From what you have learned about objective and subjective, is the feeling that something is missing from our lives objective or subjective?
  - Is that feeling something that is easy to prove to another person?
  - Do you find it a strong or weak argument for the existence of God when someone shares their testimony of what God has done in their life?
13. What does **misattribution** mean regarding the works of God and Satan? (see Appendix 2)
14. If you are a believer:
- Has this lesson **strengthened your faith**?
  - Has it made you more **comfortable defending** it with atheists?
15. Do you think that the presence or absence of a **father figure** might have influenced:
- whether you, or people that you know, believe in God?
  - what you think he is like?
  - (for more, see Appendix 3)
16. **Evangelism suggestion.** One well-known evangelist has successfully had atheists reconsider that God might exist by this: he has them hold and flip through a book with simple, colored pictures. He follows that with questions such as,
- “Do you think that this book with all its colors and printing could have appeared from nothing, by chance?”
- “What would you think of someone who said it did.”
- “Do you know what DNA is? It is the instruction book for life. It is far more complicated than that printed book.”
- “Do you think it could have appeared from nothing?”
- “If the book had a designer, wouldn’t DNA have a designer?”
- What do you think of this approach?
  - In what circumstances could you see yourself using this approach?
  - Would you change it at all?
  - If you are in a group setting, practice this approach with each other.
17. Regarding a **Personal Apologetic Testimony** (PAT, see Appendix 4):
- Have you made one?
  - What are the main points in yours?
  - How could you adapt it for sharing with different people or settings?
  - When is the next time you plan to use it?

## Appendix # 1 How to Follow Science without Being Tricked

Considering the current discord between science and religion, most people are surprised to discover that Christianity was a founding principle of science. **Most great scientists for the first 200 years were devout Christians.** For example, Isaac Newton, who among other things discovered gravity.

Modern science with its *Scientific Method*, originated in Europe in the 1600s. It was based on the belief that God was reasonable and orderly, and that his ways in the universe were reasonable and orderly. That being so, they thought, his ways in nature could be discovered.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the era of Darwin, scientists started looking to worldviews that were “natural,” meaning did not rely on God. That trend continued to grow through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then discoveries of the complexity, constants, and unlikelihood of all that exists, brought God back into the picture for many people.

Keep an eye on science. **Discoveries are constantly being made about the complexity** of the universe and life. They demonstrate more and more that chance alone cannot account for everything. But, uncomfortable with the emerging facts, atheist scientists will tend to **overlook facts that don't fit, or twist findings** into their naturalistic model. Their twists can trick you unless you are aware and looking for them.

### Two Ways Not to be Tricked

#### 1. Watch for FACT and FICTION

**Look at the evidence, but don't trust the conclusions that atheists draw from it.**

They expertly mix the objective evidence with their subjective opinions and wishes. So be *skeptical*, doubtful, of their interpretations. (Other words to describe this would be bias, prejudice, lack of objectivity, or presuppositional stance.)

For example, a popular TV science host uses the time-proven formula for deception, that used by Satan in the Garden of Eden: truth, truth, then untruth. With this approach, he has managed to deceive people, especially youths, into believing that God neither exists or is necessary. In fact, he ridicules believers.

#### Example of Mixing facts with Untruth: Early Earth and the Origin of Life

In this example regarding the origin of life, a top media scientist presents two true facts, but draws a false conclusion. The conclusion seems true because the premises are true, but not related:

True Premise: Early earth had harsh conditions

True Premise: There are bacteria that live in harsh conditions today

FALSE Conclusion: Bacteria like these could have arisen in early earth

The clever argument sounds convincing, and probably convinces almost everyone that watches. Only people who know a about logic or microbiology – and you if you are suspicious – can detect the error.

The problem is that **the bacteria which can survive in these conditions are not primitive.** They are very sophisticated. Bacteria, like those in their example which survive in extreme heat and salt, need special membranes with complex systems like salt pumps. These are not present in simple organisms. The true argument should be more like this:

Premise: Early earth had harsh conditions

Premise: Only complex organisms can survive in harsh conditions

**Conclusion: Simple organisms would not survive on early earth**

QUESTION: Perhaps you say, “I am not the most logical person, and I am certainly not an expert in every branch of science. How can I keep from being deceived?”

ANSWER: Don’t be tricked. Now you know the formula: mix facts with falsehood – more facts than falsehood so that it sounds convincing. When reading or listening, try to separate the facts from their interpretation.

**Facts are something that we can prove**, for example, that some bacteria can exist in extreme conditions. Then **look for assumptions and opinions**, like the idea that it means life originated in hot, salty water.

## **2. DON’T BE SHAKEN**

**Don’t jump at the first few reports of a discovery.**

Dr. Cynthia learned this studying medicine. There are always reports coming out of medicines that cure everything, or “amazing” discoveries. Discoveries need to be repeated and confirmed by other groups in different places, in order to be certain.

Dr. C, and most physicians, wait until treatments and practices are solidly confirmed before putting confidence in them. This is called “the standard of practice.” There are research institutions that try new things; but they need to let patients know that the treatment is unproven. In America they must review the risks and benefits before using it.

So **don’t be shaken** when you hear of new discoveries that appear to contradict the idea of God, or what you learned in this lesson. Wait for more evidence to appear.

For example, **two areas of active investigation now**, in which new information is being reported that might shake you are:

- LIFE on OTHER PLANETS: **analysis of meteors** and other space matter to determine if life could exist on other planets:
  - evidence of **water** in space would not be surprising – much of the universe is water
  - even if there were other planets with life, we know that anything anywhere was **created** by God (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16)
- GENETIC TESTING to determine the **age and history of early humans**
  - sophisticated techniques are being used which are good; but the findings are early and incomplete.
  - The methods have a wide variation of interpretation, especially with dating
  - Europeans appear to have some DNA in common with hominids, non-human primates called **Neanderthals**. The reasons are not clear yet: interbreeding or independent adaptation to the climate are options.
  - Humans are **all related**, but it’s not proven to one man and woman.
    - It could be, if Eve’s eggs were genetically mixed.
    - It’s good that we are all related. **Evolution supports racism**. Creation does not.

Again, these and other findings are being investigated now. Don't be shaken, and **don't reconstruct theology around findings which could be disproven** in a few more years.

## **Appendix # 2 Stumbling Blocks to Believing in God**

Besides their misunderstanding of science, there are a few other stumbling blocks to believing in God which we commonly see:

### **Stumbling block 1: The Problem of Evil/Suffering/Pain**

The world is full of pain and suffering. Some things happen which are downright evil. All of us experience these. None of us like it. Evil and suffering are not exactly the same; but their negative power make people doubt that there is a God.

In general, people tend to think that if they are good, nothing bad will happen to them. Often they think, if something bad happens to you, you deserve it. Certainly people can bring on bad results, and wisdom helps us live a safe and successful life; but the Bible warns us against "blaming the victim." As Ecclesiastes 9:11 says,

*"Time and chance happen to them all...  
so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them."*

### **Examples from the Bible:**

- HEALTH: The Book of Job in the Old Testament has the theme of "Why do the Righteous Suffer?"
  - The answer is that they do, and that sometimes only God knows why, but we can count on him not to forsake us (Job 40-42)
- ACCIDENTS: Jesus explained to his followers that those who died when a tower fell were not more sinful than others. (Luke 13:4)

### **Modern Example of blaming the victim: Motor Vehicle Accident Autopsy.**

Dr. C recalls an autopsy she did years ago at the Los Angeles Coroner's office, on a 16 year old young man. He died in a car crash on a winding road – one that she herself used to take at his age. Externally, the young man showed little evidence of injury. His naked body lying on the autopsy table was well-formed and his face handsome.

She thought he looked like a dead Adonis, the handsome young man of legend. As they turned over his body to examine the back, Dr C said to her assistant, "His parents must be devastated!"

The assistant saw it otherwise. He replied harshly, "Aaaah...he was probably a spoiled brat!" His hardened attitude shocked Dr. C. She discovered it reflected his general view that those dead in the coroner's office deserved what they got.

But most of the time, suffering leaves us puzzled. The Bible does tell us that God will reward his followers, but he does not promise an easy life. (Romans 8:28, John 16:33)

### **Other Religions and the Problem of Suffering/Evil**

All religions and philosophies must address the problems of suffering and evil. Atheism probably finds it easiest, in explaining that natural process account for it all.

Because of their strong belief in fate, devout **Muslims tend to accept suffering** as the will of Allah, to be borne with patience. *Alhamdulillah*, praise Allah, is to be said in all circumstances.

However, some Muslims notice that most of the world's conflicts occur in Muslims regions. The suffering resulting from these conflicts, and the often violent enforcement of Islam cause some to doubt it. They then doubt God's existence as a consequence of doubting Islam.

**Eastern religions** see human suffering as the consequence of deeds from a past life, bad *karma*. Buddha agreed with reincarnation, but began a new religion to help his followers suffer less by detaching from everything in life – including people.

### Subjective and Objective Views of Suffering/Evil

**Objectively**, there are **4 Main Causes of Suffering**:

1. from **poor human choices**
  - a. at times we know, but keep doing something destructive any way
  - b. examples: drugs, alcohol, dangerous hobbies, sexual misbehavior
2. from **people hurting people**
  - a. physically – crime, war, violence, cruelty
  - b. psychologically
3. from **diseases**
  - a. infectious
  - c. others – cancer, immune, developmental
  - d. injuries
4. from **natural forces** which keep the world running, but can also bring disasters
  - a. hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanos, weather
  - b. we can only predict and avoid some
  - c. accidents

The first two categories can be modified by human choices, the latter two less so. All of them are difficult to accept, and at times to understand.

**Subjectively**, human suffering is bad or worse. Dead bodies on a battlefield or starving children break our heart. We are outraged by crimes against humanity and war. The evil of Satanic ritual's torture of children is unimaginable for most of us. Accidents and natural disasters scare and appall us. And if we survive these, **we will eventually die** from disease.

Some diseases and injuries can bring **pain so severe** that we want to stop living. Dr. C can never forget the pain of patients calling out for mercy, or her brother's lifelong suffering with physical and mental disability. At times, death and eternity seem easier to accept than ongoing pain and distress.

## The Logical Argument of Suffering/Evil

Worldwide, evil, suffering, and pain are probably the **greatest stumbling blocks** to believing in God. A famous skeptic, who publicly complains that his doubts about Christianity came from manuscript variants, in his book admits that it was actually the problem of Evil/Pain that made him abandon God. Many others say the same,

*“If there is a God, Why do Suffering and Evil Exist?”*

As an argument of logic it could be stated this way:

Premise: If God exists there would be no suffering or evil

Premise: Suffering and evil exist

**Conclusion: God does not exist**

Remember, to disprove the logic of a conclusion, we must show that a premise is wrong. If we examine the premises, what do we find? We find three underlying assumptions – things that are **assumed to be true**:

1. God is **good**
2. God **would** change things if he/she existed
3. God **could** change things if he/she existed

But are these true?

- Some religions have evil gods.
- How do we know that God would change things? Maybe he/she has another plan?
- Could an omnipotent God have limitations?

Cultures built around monotheism tend to see God as omnipotent, all-powerful. Miracles happen when God steps in and changes the way things operate. But God doesn't always step in, he allows suffering and evil.

Not in the video is Luke's explanation for how an omnipotent God allows evil:

*“God permits evil choices to maintain our free will. God can do all things which are possible; but when God made the decision to allow humans to freely choose good or evil, it became impossible to make them freely choose the good.”*

### Watch out for misattribution!

Misattribution in this sense means **giving credit wrongly**. It is easy to give Satan credit for the good in life – like fun, music, beauty – and God credit for the bad – like injustice and cruelty. Actually, the reverse is true. If we are not familiar with God's word, and remind ourselves of it daily, we can easily **fall for this trick** of the enemy.

**Can Evil Spirits Cause Diseases?** We know from the Old Testament that evil spirits exist which are different and more powerful than us. They could take on human flesh and impregnate women (Psalm 8:5, Genesis 6:4). Human beings have learned how to clone, genetically engineer crops, and modify viruses for vaccines, etc. Dr. C thinks it is entirely possible that, having greater powers than humans and evil

intentions, **these spirits could genetically engineer bad things:** infectious diseases, cancer cells, and even alter mosquitos to suck blood.

### Sometimes good comes from pain or evil.

#### **Examples: of Pain for Good.**

1. Dr. C hated making children cry to treat them, yet it was necessary. Sometimes even adults would cry out or faint. **In order to heal** patients, doctors must steel themselves against reacting to this.
2. Older diabetics **lose their sense of pain.** As a result, they injure their feet. Sometimes they can't even tell they are having a heart attack, as happened with Dr. C's father-in-law.

These are only examples of good that comes from pain. We are too limited to know all of the good that comes, but one thing we know is that,

*“Pain is God’s megaphone to the world.”* said CS Lewis

He is right. A megaphone makes voices louder. Haven't you noticed that people who ignore God, often **speak to him when they suffer or face disaster?** They ask, “Why God?” Pain helps them realize that life is not all fun and games. It helps prepare them for eternity, which is for their ultimate good.

Awareness of daily risks and the finality of death should keep us all humble and close to God.

(Note: See also Dr. C's presentation in the videos and study guides for the *Lesson on Suffering and Thanksgiving*, and the *Lesson on Human Relationships*.)

### Stumbling Block 2: Anger with God

Often people who don't believe in God are angry with him. Does that make sense? How can we be **angry with someone who doesn't exist?**

Possibly they are angry over suffering or wars they have experienced or observed. Perhaps their anger comes from a deep-seated belief that God actually does exist, and they hold him responsible for things they don't like. When people are angry at God, you can ask:

*Are you angry because God will judge people? or because he hasn't judged them yet?*

Let them talk about it. Perhaps together you can find the source of the anger. That can help heal it. God was there when the tragedy happened. He cared.

*“For I the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward...”*

*“In all their distress, he too was distressed.”* Isaiah 63:9 & 61:8

### Stumbling Block 3: Disappointment with God

Muslims might become disappointed in the character of God/Allah that they have come to know in Islam. Syrian Wafa Sultan, our guest in another lesson, says it with the title of her book, A God Who Hates.

Others quit believing in God when prayer wasn't answered: for example, healing of a loved one, a bad grade, loss of promotion, or a disappointing love life.

We must realize that **we cannot make God be what we want**. We cannot say,

*“If he is real, God will be the way I want him to be.”*

In many religions, ceremonies and gifts are essentially bribes to get something from the god. In contrast, Christians are in **relationship with God**. That means:

- We pray for what we think is best. **But we must trust him to do what is best**, even if we can't see it.
- It is **important to believe God is good**. Otherwise we won't trust him if we are disappointed. “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good” is the most common phrase in the Bible for a reason. (Romans 8:28, Psalm 118:1)

Disappointment is also a reason that Christians, including those from Muslim background, fall away from Christian faith.

#### **Examples of disappointment: God didn't do what expected**

1. A woman who had been a “good Christian” from her heart since childhood was surprised that life turned out to be so hard. She thought that if she obeyed the Bible, life would be smooth.
2. Muslims who become Christians have often seen many answers to Christians' prayers. They can be surprised to find that God is not obligated to answer our prayers the way we want. One said, *“I don't pray. God doesn't answer my prayers anymore.”*

The solution is a better understanding of what a relationship between God and his follower means. If you find this is the problem with an atheist or backslidden Christian, try to help them through it.

#### **Stumbling Block 4: Gender Issues**

In the past few decades various kinds of gender issues have become major stumbling blocks to believing in God.

The originally wholesome movement for **women's rights**, in which true Christian women have participated, has been largely derailed into promoting **abortion** and immorality. Now, women's movements find the Bible, and the men who claim to represent it, unfair to women. These issues become of top importance to the women's movements and other concerns, like the existence of a moral God, become of lesser importance.

*(Note: Dr. C lectures on how the curse of Genesis 3 has influenced the treatment of women, and can be broken.)*

Likewise, the **LGBT** (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) movement. It has gained such popularity that even those who do not fit within those categories support it. Even though the Bible is clear that everyone sins, because the Bible mentions homosexuality and other forms of sexual immorality, the movement feels especially condemned.

Both these movements paint Bible-believers as intolerant and judgmental. **Their anger at Christians, and the very thought of God, is not based on reason**. It is an emotional distaste at the possible existence of a force which might disapprove of what they value.

The **irony** is that, atheists tend to be materialists – believing only in what is physical. Yet, although **physical bodies tell people that they are male or female**, LGBT “sense” that they are something else.



That sense is not physical. “Cognitive dissonance” results, which means that their feelings are at odds with their beliefs. They believe they are only physical, yet they have a sense that it is not so.

Talking about the cognitive dissonance of physical evidence versus gender feeling could potentially help them understand their situation better and be more open to the gospel.

(Note: read more about cognitive dissonance in the Study Guide for *Lesson on Looking for Truth in World Religions*.)

### **Do not Covet**

Wanting something that we don’t have, or can’t be – like changing our sex – could be covetous: breaking the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment. Coveting hurts us by bringing dissatisfaction, and misbehaviors. We are the happiest, when we **learn to be content with who we are and what we have**.

### **Stumbling Block 5: Race Issues**

Resentment against races that have been strongly identified with God, can be a stumbling block to believing in God or becoming Christian for those not of that race. In this case they misdirect their attention to sins or errors of the people they dislike. We have heard this mainly against white Caucasians and Jews, from blacks, East Indians, and Caucasians.

You could devote time to defending those they attack. But it is better in the long run to point out that there are nominal believers and imperfect followers, then **redirect their eyes to Jesus**. In him there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. (Hebrews 12:2,3; Galatians 3:28)

### **Stumbling Block 6: Personal Preference**

We all have personal preferences that impact what we believe in the **subjective** sense. For example, Dr. C and Luke do want to know the truth. They believe the evidence is much stronger for the existence of God than not. But even if the evidence were only equal, rather than godless emptiness,

- Luke would prefer to believe that there is a God, the high judge who will eventually straighten out all injustices.
- Dr. C would prefer to believe that there is a God, the loving Creator who made everything and cares about it.

The positive side of subjective we discussed above under “The God Gene” as the missing puzzle piece. On the negative side of subjective however, some atheists, including scientists, have admitted that they simply **prefer not to believe in God**. With this underlying motive, they accept the arguments against the existence of God, rather than the evidence for God, even if it is stronger.

- Usually, there is **sin** in their life that they know goes against what the God of the Bible teaches. Often it is sexual immorality. If they deny that God exists, they feel free to continue living however they want.
- But perhaps the deeper, underlying fear is the **sense of obligation** that one would have to their Creator as a Lord if they acknowledged him freely.

**Misattribution**, is probably involved:

- Naturalistic processes made the world, not God
- Their pleasures in life are due to Nature, rather than God
- A sense that “If I believed in God, I would lose myself and my pleasures.”

### Appendix # 3 Causes of Atheism

(Note: This is a continuation from the section above on “Causes of Atheism”)

1. **Islam** – see discussion in the main lesson

2. **Biased Education**

Those raised in the United States school system will have had the philosophy of atheistic scientific materialism throughout their education.

And what about Christian young people? Studies and personal observations over the past decades have shown that most of the young people raised in Christian homes leave the faith when they enter college.

Why?

- Almost every class presents the **atheistic viewpoint**, sometimes ridiculing Christians
- Young Christians were not adequately trained in **apologetics** (why to believe the faith). Many cite that their questions were not adequately answered by the church.
- Inadequate **spiritual support** in their new environment. There are Christian clubs on campus, but they do not always fit with the students’ schedules. Needing to find a church in their new area, along with all the other duties might seem too much for them.

4. **Shortsightedness**

It seems easier for many people to simply go through life **ignoring the Big Questions**:

**Where am I going?    What am I here for?    Where will I go after I die?**

Even near the end of life, when you think these questions would be looming, if people have trained their brains to ignore them for so long, even then they do not or cannot, consider what is of ultimate importance.

5. **Upbringing**

*“Give me a child until he is seven and I will show you the man.”*

This popular saying, originally by Aristotle and commonly quoted, emphasizes the power of the first years of life in making us who we are. If you are a parent, or other adult who has raised children, you have probably already sensed this.

A child’s mind and emotions are like a blank computer system. What we say, and how we treat them create the connections that will program how they act and feel for the rest of their lives. Here are two models where atheism can be part of a person since childhood.

#### **Model #1 Good Family**

In this setting, a child’s family is relatively “normal,” meaning providing security and shelter for the child and making them feel loved. If the parents are atheists, and teach that worldview, it is likely that the child will simply **absorb the view** from their parents and become atheist – unless some crisis or other situation intervenes (for example a romantic relationship, a challenging friend, etc.).

## Model #2 Deprived of Care

The best example of this is called *Reactive Attachment Disorder* (known as RAD). Classical examples are Romanian orphanages and the American foster care settings.

### **Infants have a Satisfaction Cycle of:**

need – crying – provision – satisfaction

Infants' **physical needs** include food and physical comfort (diaper changing), and **psychological needs** like gentle touch, and comforting speech or singing. There needs to be *at least one person that they can attach to* in the belief that they care. If an infant's needs are met, their brain becomes programmed that **someone cares**. Life is good.

Physical abuse is very damaging. But in the long run, it has been found that **neglect is worse**. Children who suffer with no one who cares, especially early on, learn to trust no one. Even God.

**Orphanage setting:** An infant in the orphanage setting can easily be deprived of provision and affection during its very important first year of life. Dr. C has studied and experienced the results of this first hand.

**Foster Care:** With more and more disturbed families, drug abuse and crime, the number of children in foster care is increasing. In the foster care setting, children are placed in a family that is not their own on a temporary basis, usually by court order.

Often these temporary situations drag on for years in uncertainty, while the court decides what to do with the child. As a result, these children end up **moving from foster home to foster home**. In short stays they don't have time to bond to a caregiver. Perhaps as bad or worse, if they do attach then must leave the foster home, they often feel that the caregiver no longer cares, even if they do. As a result, they grow up feeling disconnected and unloved – unattached emotionally.

Sadly worse, some foster families are not good. They take in children not as a calling, but for the support money. Neglect, abuse, and even sexual molestation can occur. In this setting, children deeply sense that no one cares for them, and may actually live in fear.

**Absent Father:** It is said that we attribute to God the **attitudes of our earthly fathers**. As more and more children are raised without earthly fathers, we can expect negative attitudes about God, and denial of his existence. A look into **the background of prominent atheists** has shown that many of them lacked a caring father.

We have also found that the absence or attitude of Muslims' fathers impacts how they think of God. **In some Islamic families the father is distant or harsh**. Polygamous fathers may support more than one family, stretching his time and resources. Or the father may have died in one of the many Islamic conflicts across the globe. Or, as with one case we know, the divorced father, who gets custody in Islam, removed the child from its mother and put him in the care of the rival wife, who neglected him.

**RESULT:** When a child is neglected to the point that they **believe that no one cares**, negative behaviors emerge. They feel that they must fend for themselves. No one else matters. **God, if he exists at all, cannot be trusted**. If no earthly parent cared for them, how can they believe that a heavenly parent cares?

**HEALING:** Attachment disorder can be repaired. It takes time and special training in psychology of the disorder since the "unconditional love" of usual Christian parenting does not work. Coming to understand that Christians are adopted into God's family can also help heal the wound. (Romans 8:15-17)

## **Appendix # 4 Developing a Personal Apologetic Testimony**

*Note: Similar material is in the study guide for “Lesson on Why Believe the Bible?”*

### **A PAT is a Personal Apologetic Testimony**

In the New Testament, 1 Peter 3:15 says,

*“If you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.”*

When teaching apologetics, Dr. Cynthia encourages participants to, “Develop a **PAT** and get it down pat.” A **PAT explains the reasons why you believe what you believe, and how they impact your life.** It’s a great tool for all Christians to develop, because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on the reasons for our faith, and to strengthen it.

(Note to English learners: to get something “down pat,” means to learn it well.)

Today’s lesson gives you a good opportunity to think about the reasons that you personally believe in God, and given the opportunity, how to express them to others.

### **In Spirit and in Truth**

In the study guide above on “Does God Exist?” we spoke about **objective** and **subjective** information: facts and feelings. We pointed out that human beings are physical, but are in the image of God and have a consciousness.

In John 4, Jesus told us that God wants us to worship him both objectively and subjectively - in **spirit and in truth**. We think that a good PAT will bring both to your listeners. The objective facts will prevent your listeners from discounting your testimony as simply emotional. But ending with a bit of subjective testimony could touch their spirit as well.

### **How to Prepare a PAT**

Since today’s topic is “Does God Exist?” let’s **focus a PAT on why you believe in God**. Consider, what are your favorite objective arguments for God? They might be ones we covered in the lesson, or others.

#### **3 Steps to a PAT:**

1. **Objective:** Pick 3 reasons for the existence of God that are most convincing to you
2. **Subjective:** Pick one reason that you personally feel God is real
3. **Combine:** Practice combining them in ways that would:
  - a. appeal to the needs of different people you might know or likely meet
  - b. could be varied in length from 2 to 15 minutes

A PAT is as individual as you are. There is no right or wrong PAT. What we want to encourage is that you think about some real **reasons for why you believe in God** – something besides “I believe because my pastor, or Iman, told me so,” or, “I believe there is no God, because then I can do whatever I want.”

Maybe your PAT is complex, with many points, and might even include some of the evidence we share in this or other study guides.

Perhaps your PAT is simply, “From what I’ve seen in the world, nothing comes from nothing.” Or, “If my old watch falls apart, I think it will take more than shaking it in a bag for a million years to put it back together. So I don’t believe we could have the universe without an intelligent designer.”

### **Introducing Yourself**

People consider the source of who is speaking. If you already know who you are speaking to, and they respect you, you will not need to introduce yourself. Otherwise, if you think that your background contributes to your PAT, you might want to introduce yourself. Present yourself in a way that naturally leads in to your PAT.

### **Know your Audience**

**Be sensitive to the needs of whom you are speaking to.** Your PAT should vary in emphasis, depending on whom you are sharing it with a Muslim, an atheist, or a child.

Some people have big “heart needs” and will want to hear more about how God showed his love to you. On the other hand, testimony based simply on feelings or a miracle will not hold up to the attacks of someone who wants objective facts. They could say,

*“Well, you can believe that if it makes you feel good, but I don’t feel it. It isn’t real to me.”*

People usually make decisions based on how they feel, so **ending with something that touches their spirit is a good idea.** Feelings are real, but unstable. We need stable faith based on facts; one that is not blind, and extends beyond feelings. Spirit and Truth.

### **Example of a PAT: Dr. C**

Since Dr. C dealt with death on a daily basis in her medical work, her PAT explains how she cannot deny that we are going to die. Since this is so, why we are here? Where do we go after we die? These are questions of the utmost importance. Then she explains to her listeners the scientific and other reasons that she believes in God, and the salvation presented in the Bible.

But don’t feel that you need to be a doctor or a scientist to have a PAT. Everyone has reasons for what they believe. A PAT is just recognizing what your reasons are and learning to express them.

(Note: Some of you might recognize that a PAT uses the classical *Logos, Pathos, Ethos* form of argument found to be persuasive since the days of antiquity.)

by Christian from Muslim, 2020  
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