

The Existence of God

How do we know God exists?

How do we know that God exists? The answer can be given in three parts:



First, all people have an inner sense of God.

Second, we believe the evidence that is found in scripture and in nature.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ refers to his existence.

According to the Bible all people everywhere have a deep, inner sense that God exists, that they are his creatures and that he is

their creator. Paul says that even Gentile unbelievers “knew God” but did not honour him or give thanks to him (Rom 1:21). He says that wicked unbelievers have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie” (Rom 1:25), implying that they actively or wilfully rejected some truth about God’s existence and character that they knew. He says that “what can be known about God is plain to them,” and adds that this is “because God has shown it to them” (Rom 1:19).

Read the whole of Romans 1:18-32 and discuss the questions:

- why do people reject God? See also John 3:19-21
- what are the consequences of denying the existence of God?
- How can we help people to believe?

Desire to sin is the cause:

Scripture recognises that people deny this inner sense of God and even deny that God exists. It is “the fool” who says in his heart, “there is no God. (Ps 14:1; 53:1). It is a wicked person who first “curses and renounces the Lord” and then in pride repeatedly thinks “There is no God” (Ps 10:3-4). These

passages indicate both that sin leads people to think irrationally and to deny God's existence, and that it is someone who is thinking irrationally or who has been deceived who will say "There is no God."

So sin causes people to want to deny their knowledge of God, but as we read in Romans, they are "without excuse" (1:20).

In the life of a Christian this inner awareness of God becomes stronger and more distinct. We begin to know God as our loving Father, the Holy Spirit in us bears witness that we are children of God (Rom 8:15,16) and we come to know Jesus Christ living within our hearts. The intensity of this awareness for a Christian is such that though we have not seen our Lord Jesus Christ, we indeed love Him (1 Pe 1:8).

Question:

- How can you use your personal testimony to help people believe?

Believing the evidence in Scripture

The Bible everywhere simply asserts that God exists. The first verse of Genesis begins immediately with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" If we believe the Bible is true then we know not only that God exists but also very much about his nature and his acts.

The created world also gives abundant evidence of God's existence. Paul says that God's eternal nature and deity have been "clearly perceived in the things that have been made". Nowadays we know how complex even the single cell is. All of nature proclaims a designer, right from the smallest bacteria to the complex human being made in the image of God. Whenever we meet another human being we should (if our minds are thinking correctly) realise that such an incredibly intricate, skilful, communicative living creature could only have been created by an infinite, all-wise creator.

In addition to this, there is further excellent evidence in nature. The "rains and fruitful seasons" as well as the "food and gladness" are said by Paul and Barnabus to be witnesses to God (Acts 14:17). David says: "the heavens are

telling the Glory of God; and the firmament His handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge” (Ps 19:1-2).

To look upwards into the sky by day or by night is to see sun, moon and stars, sky and clouds all continually declaring by their existence and beauty and greatness that a powerful and wise designer has made them and sustains them in their order.

In short, everything that exists gives evidence of God’s existence. For those who have eyes to see and evaluate the evidence honestly, every leaf on every tree, every blade of grass, every star in the sky and every other part of creation all cry out simultaneously: “God made me! God made me!” if our hearts and minds were not so blinded by sin, it would be impossible for us to look at a leaf from any tree and say, “No one created this: it just happened” The beauty of a snowflake, the majestic power of a thunderstorm, the skill of a honeybee, the refreshing taste of cold water, the incredible abilities of a human hand – all these and thousands of other aspects of creation simply could not have come into existence apart from the activity of an all-powerful and all-wise Creator.

Jesus Christ testifies to God’s existence.

Jesus Christ constantly testifies to the existence of God. This is our main reason for believing in His existence. If Jesus’ own existence is historically true, then logically this becomes the greatest reason for believing in God.

Questions:

- Discuss how you would defend your belief in God the creator to someone who believed that all things arrived by chance.
- How would you answer the question “who made God?”

Traditional “proofs” of the existence of God; some terms to learn:

1. *The cosmological argument* considers the fact that every known thing in the universe has a cause. Therefore, it reasons, the universe itself must have a cause. And the cause of such a great universe can only be God.
2. *The teleological argument* is really a subcategory of the cosmological

argument. It focuses on the evidence of harmony, order and design in the universe and argues that design gives evidence of an intelligent purpose (Telos = “end” or “goal”

3. *The ontological argument* begins with the idea of God who is defined as a being “greater than which nothing can be imagined”. It then argues that the characteristic of existence must belong to such a being, since it is greater to exist than not to exist. (onto=being”)

4. *The moral argument* begins from man’s sense of right and wrong, and of the need for justice to be done, and argues that there must be a God who is the source of right and wrong and who will someday mete out justice to all people

Finally:

In this meditation we’ve tried to show how rational it is to believe in the existence of God. However, faith is a gift, and while we may try to persuade men to believe, we need to pray, as eyes are only opened by the grace and mercy of God

Song: O Lord my God (396)

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation; when they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: ‘I don’t believe that God exists.’

‘Why do you say that?’ asked the customer. ‘Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn’t exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can’t imagine a loving God who would allow all of these things.’

The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt. The customer turned back and entered the barbershop again and he said to the barber: ‘You know what? Barbers do not exist.’

‘How can you say that?’ asked the surprised barber. ‘I am here, and I am a barber. And I just worked on you!’ ‘No!’ the customer exclaimed. ‘Barbers don’t exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside.’

‘Ah, but barbers DO exist! That’s what happens when people do not come to me.’ ‘Exactly!’ affirmed the customer. ‘That’s the point! God, too, DOES exist! That’s what happens when people do not go to Him and don’t look to Him for help. That’s why there’s so much pain and suffering in the world.’

Acknowledgements and further reading:
the Systematic Theology of Wayne Grudem.