

Why Believe in God?

Text: 1 Peter 3:15

By Pastor Trent Boedicker

“Why?” If you are a parent or grandparent to a small child, you’ve heard that question a lot. A family is driving along the highway and their toddler is sitting in her booster seat looking out the window. A few moments later, her voice breaks the silence. “Mommy, Daddy, why do cars have four wheels?” “That’s a great question,” her father responds. I guess that’s what it takes to support the weight of the car, helping us to roll down the road. If we get a flat tire, the other three tires allow us to pull over and put on the spare.” “Oh,” the little one says before returning to her thoughts. A few minutes later she says, “Daddy, Mommy, why is the stoplight red? I wish it was blue, that’s my favorite color.” “I’m not sure,” her mother answers. “I think because red is color that gets your attention. If the light were blue people might not notice it, but when we see red we know they had better be careful.” “Oh,” the little girl sighs, before turning her gaze out the window. It goes on like this for a while. The toddler is so inquisitive. The world is a big place and she has a thirst for knowledge. At first, her parents are proud of their little explorer. But after what seems like a million questions, they start to feel just a little exhausted. Their daughter asks, “Mommy, Daddy, why does it take so long to get to grandma and grandpa’s house. It feels like we’ve been driving forever.” They respond: “WE KNOW!” hoping she is ready for a nap.

It’s not just children who want to know “why?” Human beings are naturally inquisitive and our questions only become bigger and more significant as time goes by. We are not satisfied with easy answers but want something substantive and real. Some of the most serious questions we could ask deal with spiritual things: about God, eternity, and the condition of our soul.

Maybe you have had a friend or neighbor approach you and it’s obvious they have something on their mind. They’ve been wrestling with it for some time, but just haven’t been sure how to ask. Every Sunday they watch you pull out of the driveway and head to church. You’ve even invited them a couple of times, but they’ve always declined. But that doesn’t mean they aren’t thinking. One day, in the middle of a conversation, they ask, “Why do you believe in God?” You’re excited that you have the opportunity to share your faith, but at the same time you’re a little nervous because you’re not quite sure how to answer. On the one hand, this is something you receive by faith. You can’t see God with your eyes but know in your heart that he is real, because you have experienced his love. But you also believe that this is a reasonable faith. There are clues everywhere we turn pointing us to God, giving assurance that he is there. Think about how you might answer your friend, who wonders, “Why do believe in God?”

In our passage, the apostle Peter encourages followers of Christ to be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks the reason for our hope. He may have been thinking about the times he had been arrested for preaching the gospel and was dragged before rulers and officials who demanded an explanation for the things he believed. Or he may have had in mind the men and women he met along the way who were genuinely seeking the truth. In both situations, he trusted the Lord to give him the right words, and knew that even if people didn’t respond in that moment the seeds of the gospel had been planted.

We will also meet different kinds of people in our lives. We may encounter skeptics who are critical of our faith, but our unshakable conviction in the face of ridicule, will be a witness to them and others. And we will meet people who are curious, who simply want to know what we believe and why we believe it. In those moments we can ask the Lord to guide our words so that we are able to introduce them to the Savior. The passage calls us to prepare for these kinds of questions, because people are searching for answers and we have the message that can change their lives.

There is a field of theology called “apologetics” that has to do with defending our faith. The term comes from this passage in 1 Peter 3:15 where it says, “be ready to make a defense.” The Greek word is *apologia*. It doesn’t mean to apologize for something, it means to give answer or to offer an explanation, and that’s something Christians are called to do. There are some wonderful resources out there that can help us witness to others and also bolster our confidence when we are struggling with doubt. I’m reading a book right now called, “I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be Atheist,” by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek and they do an excellent job of looking at the question “is there a God” from a number of different angles. Another great book is “The Reason for God,” by Timothy Keller. He was a pastor in New York City where he had the opportunity to meet all kinds of people who are skeptical about the claims of Christianity, and in those conversations, he was able to offer a reason for our faith. We watched a movie in youth group awhile back about the experience of Lee Strobel, who was a journalist for the Chicago Tribune. He was a staunch atheist, but when his wife became a Christian, he used his skills as a journalist to investigate her new faith, hoping to convince her that she was wrong. In the process, however, it he realized it made more sense to believe, and he became a Christian.

People may be surprised to hear that there is evidence that points us to God. There are many who think that only the superstitious or unenlightened believe, but that’s not the case. Some of the greatest thinkers throughout history have not only believed in God but have come up with arguments that give evidence for his existence. We’re going to look at a few of those arguments this morning. When we open our hearts to the truth, it actually makes more sense to believe there is a God than to reject his existence.

One reason for the existence of God is that something or someone caused the universe to come into existence.

This has been called the Cosmological argument, and I know that sounds complicated, but the premise is really quite simple. When you look up at the stars, in the night sky, you can’t help but wonder “How did we get here? What could have caused the galaxies and solar systems to come into being?” The cosmological argument makes three points:

- Everything that has a beginning had a cause.
- The universe had a beginning.
- And so the universe must have a cause.

That makes a lot of sense. Think about the first statement. Most reasonable people would agree that when something happens there is always a cause. Things just don't magically appear out of thin air. If I'm sitting at my desk, studying, a cup of coffee doesn't suddenly materialize in front of me. It would be nice if that happened. But this would defy the laws of physics. If I want a cup of coffee I have to get up and make it. In that case I am the cause. I press the button on the coffee maker sending hot water through the grounds into my cup. There is a cause for every effect. Someone has said this is the fundamental premise of science, trying to determine what causes the events that we observe in the world.

The second statement is also true. The universe had a beginning. There was a time in the distant past when nothing that we see existed. There was no sunrise or sunset... no oceans or valleys... no mountains or trees... no summer or winter... no animals or people... nothing. Then suddenly the universe exploded into existence. We weren't there to see it happen, but we know that it did, because we are sitting here today as living proof of creation.

But what if the universe is eternal. That was a popular idea among many scientists 100 years ago. They claimed that the universe has always been here; there was no beginning, it just is and was and always will be. But recent discoveries in the fields of astronomy and physics, have made it clear that isn't the case. All of the evidence points to a definite beginning.

For one thing, the laws of physics tell us that the stars cannot burn forever. As massive and powerful as our sun might seem, it is slowly transferring its energy to produce heat and light. Just like the oil in a lamp is eventually used up, the fuel of the sun is being consumed on a much larger scale. Eventually, given enough time, the sun and the stars would all grow cold. That means the universe cannot possibly be eternal, because the lights would eventually go out.

Astronomers have made other discoveries proving the universe had a beginning. As we search the far reaches of the galaxy with telescopes and other equipment, we have learned that the universe is expanding. If it were possible to hop in a space ship and fly in a straight line towards the furthest edges of the universe, you would never get there, because it is constantly being stretched in all directions. One author writes,

How does the expanding universe prove a beginning? Think about it this way: if we could watch a video recording of the history of the universe in reverse, we would see [everything] collapse back to a [single] point, not the size of a basketball, not the size of a golf ball, not even the size of a pinhead, but mathematically and logically to a point that is actually nothing (i.e. no space, no time, and no matter). In other words, once there was nothing and then, BANG, there was something – the entire universe exploded into being. It is important to understand that... the universe did not emerge from existing material but from nothing – there was no matter before [this moment]. In fact there was no before... because there are no before's without time. Time, space and matter came into existence all at once.¹

Of course, textbooks refer to this event as the Big Bang, but the Bible calls it something different: creation. That brings us to the third statement of the argument: the universe must have had a cause. Again, things don't just materialize on their own, out of nowhere. If time, space,

and matter had a beginning that means something or someone brought it into existence. This would have to be someone of infinite power who exists outside the physical universe, not bound by the limits of time... someone like God.

Turn back to **Genesis 1:1-3** (NASB). ¹ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ² *The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.* ³ *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

That sounds a lot like a dramatic event that brought into being planets, stars, solar systems out of nothing. There was only God, and then he spoke, creating the universe with the power of his word. Scripture answers our questions: "Why are we here?" In the beginning God... He is the cause that set everything else into motion.

It's always fun to watch a fireworks display in the summer. You camp out in the front yard, laying on a blanket, looking up at the night sky. All of the sudden there is loud boom followed by explosion of color. You say "oooooh, that was awesome." I always thought it would be interesting to see how it all happens. We know that explosions of light do not happen on their own. There is a crew of experts, somewhere, responsible for putting on the display. They set up the launchers, and set the fireworks in place, and when the moment comes, they light the fuse. Without that person, nothing would happen. No light. No color. No explosions. But someone is working behind the scene to cause the beautiful display that we enjoy. And someone was there before time began lighting the fuse to bring the universe into existence. God called out, "Let there be light" and there was light. People have invented all kinds of wild theories to avoid this conclusion, but when we examine the evidence it make a lot more sense to me to believe that God is the one who created the heavens and the earth.

Hebrews 3:4 tells us, "*For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.*" And Jeremiah 10:12 says, "*But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.*"

Another reason for the existence of God is the intricate design we see in the world around us.

We call this the Teleological Argument. I know, this name is even worse than the other, but again, it's not as complicated as it might sound. We touched on this a few weeks ago when we saw how the conditions of the earth had to fall within a very precise range to support life. The distance from the sun, the gravitational pull, the mixture of gasses in the atmosphere are all finely tuned to make this a suitable environment for us to live. The odds that each of these variables would happen, by chance, is virtually impossible.

The same is true when we look at the complexity of living things. Think about our bodies. The human brain is more powerful than the world's most advanced supercomputer. Every second it is processing a vast amount of information: transmitting images that are received through our eyes, deciphering sounds that enter our ears, sifting through smells that are detected

by our nose. It also controls the functions of our body we take for granted like breathing or blinking our eyelids, or circulating blood. It directs our muscles, moving our hands and feet so we can navigate our way through the world. We have intelligence: we're able to think, reason, plan for the future and dream. Our brain stores memories, and weighs emotions. It allows us to communicate with other people. Someone has said that the human brain processes more than million messages a second.ⁱⁱ

No wonder Scripture tells us, in **Psalm 139:14** (NASB), *“I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, and my soul knows it very well.”*

The intricacies of our bodies show us that we were designed by a wise and intelligent God. What other explanation makes sense? Can you really imagine that living creatures came about on the earth completely by accident? ...that a bolt of lightning happened to strike a pool of chemicals that would eventually lead to us... that the forces of nature, somehow, on their own, worked together to produce the miracle of life?

When I was in junior high, we had a computer lab at school with the old Apple 2E computers. When you turned on the monitor there was a blinking green dot flashing on the screen. There weren't graphics, only text. It ran a simple program that drew lines when you typed a command. Up 10 spaces: zzzzz. Down 10 spaces: zzzz. And that was it, that's all we did in computer class. We thought it was the coolest thing. I wanted to stay in during recess to watch the computer draw lines on the screen but the teacher made us go outside to play. At the time this was the height of technology. We were cutting edge. Little did we know that a few years down the road our watches would have a million times more processing power than the old Apple 2E. But as simple as that computer was, we knew that it wasn't assembled by chance. It didn't roll down the assembly line on its own while the parts happened to fall into place. That's sill. It was designed by an engineer, and codes were written by a programmer. The people who built it were incredibly smart.

So how can anyone imagine that human brain, which is infinitely more complex, randomly came together without a creator? It doesn't make any sense. There is evidence of design in our bodies. Where there is design there is a designer.

Psalm 104:24–25 (NIV84) says, *“How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ²⁵ There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small.”*

Another reason for the existence of God is the called the Moral Argument.

The moral argument tells us that all people have a basic awareness of right and wrong inscribed on their conscience. We know instinctively that there are certain things we shouldn't do: we shouldn't lie, or steal, or cheat, or commit murder. And there are other things that we ought to do: we ought to love our family, and show kindness to others, and treat people with dignity and respect. These principles are not just a matter of personal opinion, but represent a

standard that exists outside of us. It applies to all people everywhere whether you live in the United States or China or Zimbabwe.

We don't always live up to that standard, but deep down we know it's there, and we feel guilty when we fall short. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Think of country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five."ⁱⁱⁱ

The idea of moral absolutes has fallen out of favor in our culture. Many people today want to believe that we are free to define right and wrong for ourselves, and no one has the right to impose their values on other people. They say, "We all have our own truth. You might believe that a certain behavior is wrong, but it is perfectly okay for someone else." But relativism doesn't work. How would that person feel if someone came up behind him and said, "Give me your wallet?" Would he still claim that everyone has a right to define right and wrong for themselves? I don't think so. He would complain, "You can't do that, it isn't right to steal!" See, relativism only works until someone wrongs you, and then you realize that there is such a thing as right and wrong.

So where does this standard come from? It comes from God. Turn to Romans 2:14–15 (NASB95).

¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

The apostle Paul tells us that God is the one who has written his law on our hearts. In the OT he revealed his commands to the people of Israel, but even those who did not possess this law had a basic awareness of right and wrong that was enough to make them accountable before him. The moral law reflects the character of God. If something conforms his holy standard it is good and true. But if something does not line up with his holy standard it is wrong and false. If there is a Law, there must be a lawgiver.

Psalm 11:7 (NIV84) says, "*For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.*" **Psalm 119:142–144** (NASB95) tells us, "*Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.*"

People today love to talk about justice and human rights, even though they don't want to acknowledge where the concept originates. If there is no God, and if we are nothing more than highly developed animals (as some people claim) then there is no basis for justice. Look at nature. Is there peace and harmony in the animal kingdom? No, there is violence. The lion devours the antelope, the strong feed on the weak. So why should we expect it to be any different among human beings? If the world is all about survival of the fittest, why should we be angry when we see those with power exploiting the helpless and vulnerable? Why should we have compassion for those in need? Why should anyone care? In the grand scheme of things, it would not matter if there is no God. We should care because there is something that sets us apart

from the animals. Human beings are moral beings, made in the image of God. Even though sin has distorted our understanding of right and wrong, our conscience continues to instruct us telling us that there is a standard that comes from above.

Tim Keller writes,

“If the world was made by a God of peace, justice, and love, then that is why we know that violence, oppression, and hate are wrong. If the world is fallen, broken, and needs to be redeemed, that explains the violence and disorder we see. If you believe human rights are a reality, then it makes much more sense that God exists than that he does not. If you insist on a on a secular view of the world and yet you continue to pronounce some things right and some things wrong , then I hope you see the deep disharmony between the world your intellect has devised and the real world (and God) that your heart knows exists.”^{iv} Keller, p.156

There is such a thing as justice. There are absolute principles of right and wrong that applies to everyone no matter what people might think. It isn't defined by the culture. It isn't defined by those who happen to be in power. It isn't defined by popular opinion. It comes from God.

Why Believe?

Why do you believe in God? We've looked at a few logical arguments that have made to help us wrestle with that question. Something or someone caused the universe. There is evidence of design in every living thing. And there is a standard of right and wrong that comes from a source higher than ourselves. These are just a few reasons, and we could list more, but ultimately we there is no argument that will convince us if we are not willing to open our hearts to the possibility that there is a God who loves us and pursues us, who came to this earth to redeem us. He is there, calling your name, inviting you to turn from a life of skepticism and doubt, to believe in his name.

There was a man in the gospel of Mark who was struggling to place his trust in Jesus. He had heard about the wonderful things Christ had done, and could sense that there was something special about this teacher from Nazareth, but it wasn't easy to let go of his doubts. He cried out, “I do believe, help my unbelief,” (Mk. 9:24). And the Lord helped him to overcome the things that were holding him back. Maybe you can identify with this man. You have heard wonderful things about Jesus, and deep down you know that there is something special about him, that he is no ordinary man, but the Son of God who came to save us from our sin. He has shown us the love of God, and gives us hope for eternity. You want to believe, but there are so many fears and doubts that are standing in the way. Maybe you need to cry out, like that man, “I believe, help my unbelief.” Ask God to open your eyes, open your heart, that you might receive him in faith.

If you have trusted in Christ as your Savior, these arguments give us confidence in a world that tells us we are foolish to believe. Don't listen to the world, listen to the Word of the Lord. And be ready to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

ⁱ Geisler, Norman and Turek, Frank "I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist" Crossway Publications: Wheaton, IL p. 79

ⁱⁱ <https://www.everystudent.com/features/isthere.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Lewis, C.S. "Mere Christianity"

^{iv} Keller, Timothy "The Reason for God, p. 156