



# The God Questions

Exploring Life's Great Questions About God

Daily Readings & Study Guide

Hal Seed & Dan Grider

“*The God Questions* is a great reminder that honest questions deserve true and thoughtful consideration. Hal and Dan have done their homework to do just that, and in the process, build the case that Biblical faith is not a blind leap in the dark, but that there are indeed some sound reasons, discernible evidences and intellectual integrity upon which to place one’s personal trust in the God of the Bible.”

– Denny Bellesi, Founding Pastor,  
Coast Hills Community Church, California,  
and author of *Kingdom Assignment*

“A good question is often as important as a good answer, and *The God Questions* guides you through plenty of both. The authors weave winsome stories, expert quotes, relevant scriptures and common sense into a ready reference for both committed Christians and sincere seekers.”

– Judson Poling, editor of *The Journey Bible*

“*The God Questions* is one of the most relevant books for our day. It is practical, down-to-earth and full of helpful stories and insights for anyone who has ever asked a “God question.” I love the combination of brevity and scholarship. This is an apologetics book in overalls. Anyone can benefit from it. I believe this is the book that tens of thousands of hungry people desperately need for their spiritual journey.”

– Dr. Tim Elmore, Founder, GrowingLeaders.com

“*The God Questions* is a powerful tool to help you and your friends dialogue about the deeper meaning of life. Hal and Dan have written a clear, concise and practical guide that is sure to challenge your faith and expand your perspective. Don’t miss *The God Questions!*”

– Jud Wilhite, Sr. Pastor, Central Christian Church, Las Vegas, and author of *Stripped: Uncensored Grace on the Streets of Vegas.*

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# OUTREACH

*The God Questions* Fourth Edition

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Interior Design: Alexia Wuerdeman  
Editing: Jennifer Dion and Toni Ridgaway

## **DEDICATION**

To Lori,  
the love of my life.  
— Hal

To Debbie,  
the love of my life.  
— Dan

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# Turn on the Light

## **Your Guide to *The God Questions* Journey**

If you've ever switched on a light bulb in the middle of a dark room, you know what it feels like to be "illuminated." During the next 40 days as you explore the answers to many of life's great spiritual questions, you are going to experience mental and spiritual illumination. You are going to feel like a great big light bulb has turned on in your mind and, perhaps, another one in your soul.

*The God Questions* is designed to give you answers to your deepest spiritual questions. The four major and four minor questions included in this book represent most of the questions that are commonly asked about Christianity. Once you understand the answers, you will not only have the answers you need for your faith, but you'll be able to help answer your friends' questions as well.

*The God Questions* is written in bite-sized chunks, so that you can read for three days, meet with your small group (if applicable) to discuss what you're learning, and then read three more days to get further answers to the same general question. There is a total of 40 days, or six weeks of reading. As you read, you'll notice that Days 7, 14, 21, 28 and 35 do not have a question to address. We'd like to encourage you to take a break from your studies, or "Sabbath," on the seventh day to reflect, catch up and—we hope—attend church.

Each day's reading is short, relevant and easy to understand. Once you've read the book through (preferably with a highlighter in hand), you will be able to come back and easily find these answers again, even

years from now. At the end of each chapter is a section called “*THINKING ABOUT IT.*” It includes *Something to Chew On*, a *Verse to Remember*, a *Point to Ponder*, and an open section titled, *My Thoughts on the Subject*. Use this section to reflect and let what you’ve learned sink in deeper. If you fully utilize this section, you will find that the words you write in *My Thoughts on the Subject* will be the most important words in the book.

*The God Questions* was designed for study individually, with a small group or with your church as a whole. If appropriate, encourage your church to participate in *The God Questions* together. Church leader resources are available at [Outreach.com](http://Outreach.com). Now, let’s begin!

# WHAT DO ANSWERS DO FOR ME?

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*“The secret things belong to the Lord our God,  
but the things revealed belong to us and to  
our children forever, that we may  
follow all the words of this law.”*

Deuteronomy 29:29

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Over these next 40 days, you will explore the answers to some of life’s most important questions. You will acquire vital information, and information is power—especially the right information. What you are about to experience is what I call *“true truth about truth”*: not just opinion or hearsay, but time-tested and God-revealed truth. So get ready! Your new life starts today.

When I was a little guy, my father did a lot of business traveling. I loved this, because every time he came home he brought me a present. One present I remember vividly was a watch from Hong Kong. I was six years old and couldn’t tell time, but I loved that watch. I wore it proudly around the neighborhood. Kids would ask me, “What time is it?” I’d say, “I don’t know.” And they’d respond, “What do you mean you don’t know? Look at your watch!” So I’d look at my watch, but it did me no good whatsoever.

How do you suppose I felt every time that happened? Embarrassed? Yep. Stupid? A little. Lame? Definitely. I was

walking around with a prized possession on my wrist, and it was functionally useless to me—until one day my neighbor Timmy taught me how to tell time! It only took a little while for him to teach me, and after that I felt empowered, important and useful. I became the time-teller for our neighborhood. Whenever any of the other kids wanted to know what time it was, they asked me.

Have you ever thought, “*I have questions about God that just never seem to go away?*” Or have you ever said, “I wish I had the answer to the questions my friends are asking about Christianity”? At the end of the next 40 days, you will be empowered to answer those questions. When you finish this journey, you will have more confidence in God, more confidence in yourself and more confidence in your faith, because you’ll have answers to questions that have been asked of Christianity for the last 2,000 years.

*“God, if you’re really there,  
please answer me!”*

The cry of every despairing heart

Proverbs 1:7 says, “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.*” The Hebrew word for “fear”—*Yir’ah*—means “to shrink back in awe and lean forward in wonder.” The first time I visited the Grand Canyon, I was so captured by its beauty that I instinctively leaned forward to get a better view, and instantly leaned back to keep from falling into it. That’s *Yir’ah*. This verse also says that an important first step in any faith adventure is seeing God for who He really is. The reverse is also true: Your first steps in acquiring knowledge are the beginning of your deepening respect and reverence for God. In short, expect your sense of awe and wonder for God to grow during this adventure.

I suggest you pray this prayer as we start the adventure together: *God, teach me the answers to the questions I have about You, so that I can have more confidence and more faith.*

WEEK ONE

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MAJOR QUESTION:

**Is God Real?**

# WHERE DID THE WORLD COME FROM? *Part 1*

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*“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies  
proclaim the work of his hands.”*

Psalm 19:1

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Throughout human history, people have questioned the existence of God. We can't see, hear, feel, touch or taste Him, so how can we know for sure if He exists? It's such an important question that scholars have given it deep thought over the ages. Many have concluded that there are sound reasons to believe in Him. This week, we'll give you five of them; together they form a compelling argument that God is real. They'll even point you toward the kind of God He is.

## **Reason #1—The Universe**

The universe itself is a powerful pointer to the existence of God. It's big and beautiful, and all of its parts work together well. Its very existence raises the question: *“How did the universe get here?”* Think about it: If nothing existed, would you have to explain it? Of course not! But the moment something exists, a question can be raised of its origin. Interestingly, it is the attempt to answer this question that led many scientists to conclude that God must exist.

The most obvious answer to “How did the universe get here?” is, “It came from something else.” Animals come from their parents, plants come from seeds, houses come from a builder and cars come from factories. In fact, *everything* in the universe comes from something else; it is **contingent** on something that came before it.

*“The first question which should rightly be asked is: Why is there something rather than nothing?”* G. W. Leibniz

In addition, everything that exists depends on something else. Humans depend on food to live. Plants depend on the sun for photosynthesis. The sun depends on gravity to keep from breaking apart. So everything in the universe came from something else, and everything is **dependent** on something else in order to exist.

Push way back into the history of the universe and ask, “Where did all of this stuff come from?” The answer most people come to is “God.” Everything in the universe was created by something else and depends on something else. The cause of all of this must be something that is uncreated and independent—or, in positive terms, something that is **eternal** and **self-sufficient**. The only being that could fit such a description is God.

Another way to think about this is to view the universe as one big object. Using your mind as a camera lens, zoom out so far that you capture everything in the universe in the circle below. Everything inside the circle is contingent and dependent.



THE  
UNIVERSE



The universe has not always existed. Therefore, it must have come from something that is non-contingent and non-dependent. Those two terms come very close to a working definition of God.

The Bible says, "...the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands... There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world." (Psalm 19:1) God is communicating to us through what we see of the universe! He's saying, "I am here. I exist. You can tell, because I made this place."

Everything that's been made must have a maker. The French skeptic Voltaire once said, "I shall always be convinced that a watch proves a watch-maker." In the same way, the existence of the universe proves a God.

# THINKING ABOUT IT

## **Something to Chew On:**

The universe points to the existence of a Creator God.

## **Verse to Remember:**

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”* Psalm 19:1

## **Point to Ponder:**

When I look at the world, do I believe it is the result of intentional creation?

## **My Thoughts on the Subject:**

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# WHERE DID THE WORLD COME FROM? *Part 2*

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*“In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.”*

Psalm 102:25

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## **Reason #2—The Creator**

My wife and I have a very special box in a cabinet in our garage. It contains scores of pictures our daughter Amy drew as a little girl. If you look through the box, you can guess how old Amy was at the painting of each picture. Some look like they were painted by a four-year-old, others by an eight-year-old, still others by a sixteen-year-old. You can tell a lot about a Creator by studying what she (or he) has created. This illustrates the second evidence of the existence of God, although it's more subtle than the first: If there cannot be a creation without a Creator, then **every design reflects its designer.**

Chart the path of the stars, measure the decay rate of an atom, examine the laws of physics: Everything you study is well-ordered, precise and complex. Stare up into the night sky, walk along a beach at sunset, put a snowflake under a microscope; everywhere you look, our world is saturated with beauty. This beauty and complexity in the universe point not only to a Creator, but also to the nature of the Creator: ingenious, beautiful and detailed.

Plato decided that it was reasonable to believe in God based on “the order of the motion of the stars, and of all things under the dominion of the mind which ordered the universe.”<sup>1</sup> Sir Isaac Newton said, “When I look at the solar system, I see the earth at the right distance from the sun to receive the proper amounts of heat and light. This did not happen by chance.”<sup>2</sup>

### The Pepsi Can<sup>3</sup>

Imagine that sitting on the desk in front of me is a Pepsi can. How did it get here?

Here’s a theory: Millennia ago, a huge explosion sent a small meteor spinning through space. As it cooled, a caramel-colored, effervescent liquid formed on its surface. As time passed, aluminum crept out of the water and shaped itself into just these dimensions. Over time, this thing formed itself a one-time retractable lid, from which a crease appeared, a bit off-center, and out of it grew a pull-tab. Centuries later, red, white and blue paint fell from the sky and clung to its exterior, forming the letters P-e-p-s-i on its surface. (Obviously, these five letters have a deeper meaning to them, because you see them everywhere.)

*“The mathematical precision of the universe reveals the mathematical mind of God.”*

Albert Einstein

This Pepsi can fits perfectly in the palm of the normal-sized human hand. Its volume is just about right for satisfying one person’s desire for something sweet and liquid. It has just enough caffeine to pep you up a bit, but not so much that you realize you’re actually in an artificially induced state of stimulation. Its contents are always the same. Its quality never varies.

How many scientific explanations about the nature of matter and the origins of the universe would I have

to give to convince you that the Pepsi can happened by chance? What are the odds that something this complex, useful, comfortable and attractive came about as a result of a random collision of molecules? The can is too carefully designed to be the result of chance or coincidence. Some very smart people did some careful thinking and planning to make the Pepsi can happen.

## **The Banana**

Now, hold a banana in your hand. Notice the banana fits perfectly in your palm. In fact, it fits better than the Pepsi can. It's been thoughtfully made with a non-slip surface. It comes with a time-sensitive indicator on the outside to let you know the condition of the contents before you even open it: Green means "keep going," yellow means "slow down and eat it," and black means "too late, friend."

The banana's top contains a pull-tab for convenient opening. Pull back firmly on the tab, and it peels neatly according to its pre-made perforations. If it's at just the right stage for eating, it even gives off a little "click" sound as it's opened. The wrapper peels into four pieces and hangs gracefully over your hand. Unlike the Pepsi can, this wrapper is environmentally sensitive, made completely of bio-degradable substances that in time enrich the soil it nestles in. If left uneaten, it has pre-programmed orders to reproduce itself into a whole new fruit-bearing plant, so it is a virtually inexhaustible food-producing source.

The fruit is the perfect size and shape for the human mouth, with a point on the top for easy entry. It is full of bodybuilding calories and is easy for the stomach to digest. And the Maker of the banana has even curved it toward the face to make the whole eating experience easier and more pleasant.

No wonder the Bible says about God, “*Your workmanship is marvelous...*”<sup>4</sup> From looking at the design of the banana, I conclude that there is a God; that He is brilliant, creative and thoughtful; and that He loves to delight people through all five of our senses.

# THINKING ABOUT IT

## **Something to Chew On:**

The beauty, size, intricacy and wonder of the universe point to a God who loves beauty and is big, smart and wonderful.

## **Verse to Remember:**

*"In the beginning you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."* Psalm 102:25

## **Point to Ponder:**

What's the right response to a God who so carefully constructed the banana (and the world) for my pleasure?

## **My Thoughts on the Subject:**

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## WHY IS THERE MORALITY?

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*“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”*

Romans 2:14-15

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### **Reason #3—Our Sense of Morality**

When I was a small child, my mother and I had a tradition. We would go to the store together, and if I was a good boy, she would buy me a treat. One of the saddest days of my young life was the day that didn't happen. I remember it vividly. We were standing in the checkout line and I put my candy bar on the conveyor belt.

“No,” she said, “I'm not buying you a treat today.”

“Why not? I've been a good boy.”

“I'm just not, that's all.”

Since she had no good reason *not* to get me the candy bar, I saw no good reason not to get it for myself. I pretended to take it back to the candy aisle, but on the way, I buried it deep in my pants pocket.



Can you guess why I remember that day so vividly? Yep, I got caught. When we got home, I snuck into the living room, pulled out my candy bar and started eating. My mother, who always seemed to have a sixth sense of some kind, found me there with a wad of chocolate in my cheek.

“What are you eating?” she asked.

“A candy bar.”

“And where did you get it?”

“At the grocery store.”

“And how did you pay for it?”

“I didn’t.”

What followed was a lesson I will never forget. Mom drove me back to the store, located the store manager and made me admit my theft, apologize and pay for the candy bar. I felt embarrassed, humiliated and ashamed all at the same time.

Did I learn my lesson? Yes and no. Yes, I learned that crime doesn’t pay. But no, I didn’t learn to be absolutely honest from that day forward. The truth is, when I took that candy bar, I *already* knew that I was taking something that didn’t belong to me. I knew what I was doing was wrong, but I did it anyway.

I’ve even done it since then. I haven’t stolen any more candy bars, but I have taken things that didn’t belong to me. And I’ve done worse. I’ve said things that

weren’t true in order to make myself look better. I’ve done things to other people that I knew would hurt them. I strongly identify with the Apostle Paul: *“I don’t understand*

*“If no set of moral ideas were truer or better than any other, there would be no sense in preferring civilized morality to savage morality, or Christian morality to Nazi morality. The moment you say one lot of morals is better than another, you are in fact measuring them by an ultimate standard.”* C.S. Lewis

*myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong... But I can't help myself...*"<sup>5</sup>

I've taken surveys in my church asking, "How many of you have never said anything that you knew wasn't true or taken something that doesn't belong to you?" No one has raised their hand. We're all guilty. We all have a moral standard that we believe in but can't seem to live up to. Paul says, "*It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.*"<sup>6</sup>

How many times have you started to do something, and an alarm in your head said, "Don't do that!" but you did it anyway? How many times have you opened your mouth, and your conscience said, "Don't say it!" but you said it anyway? You know what the right thing is, even if you don't always do it. Where did that sense of "right" come from? This is the third reason to believe in God: **We all have a moral standard that is higher than we are.**

Ethical codes vary from person to person and culture to culture, but every human being has an innate moral standard. Where did this moral standard come from? Since it's impossible to invent something that is greater than we are, there must be a moral Creator who put this standard in us.

# THINKING ABOUT IT

## Something to Chew On:

My personal moral standards point to an absolute Moral Standard-Giver.

## Verse to Remember:

*“God’s law is written within them, for their own consciences either accuse them or tell them they are doing what is right.”* Romans 2:15, NLT

## Point to Ponder:

What would the world be like without a universal sense of right and wrong? What has happened, historically, when morality has been abandoned?

## My Thoughts on the Subject:

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# WHO IS JESUS?

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*“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory  
and the exact representation of his being...”*

Hebrews 1:3

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## **Reason #4—Jesus**

One of the greatest evidences of the existence of God is **the life of Jesus Christ**. Jesus claimed to be God.<sup>7</sup> Many people struggle with this claim, because there are only two possibilities for it: Either it’s true, or it’s not true. If it’s true, He is Lord and God. If it’s not true, there are only two possibilities. One is, His claim was false, and He knew it. The other is, His claim was false, and He didn’t know it, but actually thought He was God. If it was false and He knew it, that would make Him a **liar**. If it was false and He didn’t know it, that would make Him a **lunatic**. (Any person who really believes he is God must be clinically insane.) This is what’s known as “The Trilemma.”<sup>8</sup> It presents us with three choices—Jesus was the Lord, a liar or a lunatic.

C.S. Lewis, who was once an avowed agnostic, saw the reasoning behind this and eventually became a Christian as a result. Afterward, he wrote:

*A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level*

*with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God: or else a madman or something worse.*<sup>9</sup>

Mohammed and Joseph Smith claimed to be prophets. Buddha and Confucius were silent on the idea of God. Only Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh.

Most people who dismiss the resurrection of Christ do not take the time to look closely at the facts. But those who honestly study this unique event in history conclude, like C.S. Lewis, that no one but God Himself could pull off such a miracle. So consider the following Biblical account of the facts, corroborated by the historical knowledge of ancient Roman practices and other first century records.

On Good Friday, Jesus was flogged 39 times with a cat-o-nine tails.<sup>10</sup> This process was so injurious that by the time it was over, His flesh was in ribbons and His organs were exposed.<sup>11</sup> A crown of thorns was placed on His head,<sup>12</sup> and a 110-pound crossbar was placed on His shoulders.<sup>13</sup> He was too weak from the beating to make it all the way up the hill, so a bystander named Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the crossbar for Him.<sup>14</sup> He was nailed to a cross, where He was pronounced dead by a professional Roman executioner, who verified His death by piercing his heart with a spear.<sup>15</sup> This Centurion was so impressed with the way Jesus faced death that he remarked, *“Truly this was the Son of God!”*<sup>16</sup>

*“Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God.”* Jean-Jacques Rousseau

According to Jewish custom, Jesus’ body was placed on a stone table in the burial chamber (which was a freshly prepared tomb hewn out of solid rock<sup>17</sup>).

He was washed with warm water and packed in 100 pounds of spices.<sup>18</sup> His body was wrapped in no fewer than three separate burial garments,<sup>19</sup> and a 1½- to 2-ton stone was placed in front of the tomb's doorway.<sup>20</sup> Pilate ordered a guard unit<sup>21</sup> to make the tomb "*as secure as you know how.*"<sup>22</sup> The guards sealed the stone to the tomb<sup>23</sup> with clay packs and stamped it with Pilate's official signet ring. From what they had witnessed, the disciples were despondent and fearful.<sup>24</sup> When reports of Jesus' resurrection came in, they refused to believe that He was alive.<sup>25</sup>

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, His disciples would have known it. Of the original 12 disciples, Judas Iscariot hanged himself believing that his betrayal caused Jesus' death.<sup>26</sup> John died in exile in modern-day Turkey. The other 10 were all put to death for their faith. Sometimes good men will die for a good cause, but how likely is it that that many would die for a lie?

Jesus' tomb had been officially sealed, and the penalty for breaking a Roman seal was crucifixion upside down.<sup>27</sup> Who would have the courage or motivation to do this? The huge stone covering the tomb was rolled *uphill* to open the tomb entrance. Who would have the strength and numbers to do this? The Roman guard unit was trained to hold their ground against an entire battalion. Who could have overcome them?<sup>28</sup> When Mary, Peter and the others viewed the grave clothes, they were undisturbed (except the face cloth, which was rolled up in a place by itself<sup>29</sup>). The linen wrappings were lying on the table in the form of a body, slightly caved in and empty. How did that happen?

Five people examined the tomb and found it empty on what would become the first Easter Sunday morning.<sup>30</sup> Over the next 40 days, Jesus appeared to more

than 515 eyewitnesses.<sup>31</sup> These eyewitnesses were from various stations in life and various states of disbelief. But their lives were so changed that they, in turn, devoted the rest of their lives to sharing the story of Jesus' resurrection with as many people as they could reach. What can explain this?

# THINKING ABOUT IT

## **Something to Chew On:**

The life of Jesus points to the existence of a supernatural world and a supernatural God.

## **Verse to Remember:**

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”* Colossians 1:15

## **Point to Ponder:**

Do I need more proof in order to believe in Jesus’ claim to be God? If so, what questions do I need answered? If not, how will I follow Jesus today?

## **My Thoughts on the Subject:**

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# WHAT ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE?

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*“Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.”*

2 Kings 5:15

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## **Reason #5—Personal Experience**

On January 20, 1971, I agreed to visit a Christian coffeehouse event with some friends, although at the time I was not a Christian. During a conversation on the way there, one of my friends, Dick Roth, used a phrase I thought was really odd. He said, “I talked to God this morning.” It seemed so absurd to me that I laughed out loud. However, two hours later on the way home, Dick asked me if I wanted to begin a personal relationship with God. I did! What happened to me? **I had an experience with God** at that coffeehouse. I saw evidence of His real presence in the lives of the people there. And I experienced His presence for myself, personally.

The whole idea of having a relationship with God was so new to me that when I woke up the next morning I had to verify it. So I asked the question I’ve asked many times since: “God, are you really there?” As I said that, I suddenly had a sense that He was saying, “Yes, I’m here.” I even felt subtle chills run down my spine. I

have asked that same question hundreds of times since then, and every time I ask, I get the same response: “Yes, I’m here,” and I get chills. That’s been happening now for 33 years.

How do I explain that? Some might say, “Well, you just really *wanted* to believe.” But I really didn’t. I was content with my life. However, I experienced enough evidence that night to convince me that there was a God, a God who was interested in having a relationship with me. So I invited Him to be my friend and leader, and the minute I did, I experienced Him.

The Bible says that everyone can have an experience with God if they sincerely look for Him. “*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*” It also says that we were made to experience God, that “*God...has planted eternity in the human heart...*”<sup>32</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most powerful men of the first millennium B.C. As emperor of Babylonia from 605 B.C., he built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) and controlled virtually all of Mesopotamia. Nebuchadnezzar was a polytheist, believing in a whole pantheon of gods.<sup>33</sup> His story makes its way into the Bible because, at a critical juncture in his life, he had an experience with God that left him saying, “*Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.*”

*“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”* C.S. Lewis

In about 825 B.C., the commander of the Syrian Army was a general named Naaman. In the midst of a

stellar military career, Naaman contracted leprosy. Like Nebuchadnezzar, Naaman's belief system was that of his surrounding culture. He was an animist, believing that many gods inhabited various geographic features (rivers, mountains, the sky, etc.) and performed the functions necessary for life on earth (moving the sun across the sky, making rain, etc.) Attempting to find a cure for his leprosy, Naaman ventured outside of his theological comfort zone and sought the God of Israel. God healed Naaman, and based on his experience Naaman said, "*Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.*"<sup>34</sup>

What happened to both of these men? They had an experience with God. Experience is strong evidence of the existence of God. True, it is *subjective* evidence, not *objective*; you can't replicate it in a laboratory. But even though your experience with the supernatural may differ from mine, the fact that *so many* have experienced God in a meaningful way is hard to argue with, and harder still to explain—unless God is real.

Years ago, a man named Greg started attending the church I pastor. "I'm an atheist," he announced, but he kept coming. One afternoon, after going over the evidence for God's existence, Greg said to me, "Actually, all of my life I have felt like God has had His hand on my shoulder." In their heart of hearts, most people have had that same experience. That day, Greg reached out to God just as God had been reaching out to Greg. The two of them have been doing life together ever since.

Anthropologists tell us that every culture on earth has held a belief in some type of God. But people tend to view *experience* as a weak argument for believing in God—until they reach out and have the experience for themselves. Then it becomes the most compelling reason of all.

# THINKING ABOUT IT

## **Something to Chew On:**

The experience of millions of people points to the existence of God.

## **Verse to Remember:**

*“God...has planted eternity in the human heart...”* Ecclesiastes 3:11, NLT

## **Point to Ponder:**

How have I experienced God? And if I haven't experienced Him, am I open to that experience?

## **My Thoughts on the Subject:**

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## IS THERE ANY PROOF I CAN TOUCH?

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*“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.”*

Hebrews 11:1, NLT

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Even in matters of faith, we want proof. In December 2002, Cliffe Knechtle and Dr. Michael Newdow held a nationally broadcasted debate. Knechtle is a Christian pastor and a staff member at Intervarsity Christian Fellowship for college students. Newdow is an atheist attorney and physician. Newdow had recently gained national notoriety for suing to have the words “under God” removed from the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance. The subject of the debate was *“Is God Real?”*

Several times during the debate, Knechtle referred to the evidences that we have already explored in our reading. None of them convinced Newdow. Newdow consistently cited the one reason that kept him from believing: He could not see, hear, touch, taste or smell God; he had never seen God respond to a prayer like, “God, if you’re real, show me a sign.” Newdow was holding out for *scientific proof* for the existence of God. “If I can’t see Him, I can’t believe in Him,” he reasoned.

Is his request reasonable? Yes and no. Yes, it is reasonable to expect evidence for the things we believe. In a court of law, no one is convicted based on hearsay; substantiated proof is required. But no, wanting scientific proof is not reasonable in a case like this, because this is not a case where science is of most help to us. Scientific proof is based on replicating a process or event multiple times in a controlled environment. Science is based on a belief that *natural laws* are always at work, so that every time we do the same experiment, we should get the same results. The problem is that God isn't merely *natural*; He's *supernatural*.

Suppose a careful scientist were to set up a controlled experiment to test for God. He says, "I will believe in God if, right now, He causes this cup I'm holding to disappear," and the cup disappears. Then what? If he genuinely believes that supernatural phenomena are impossible, he will look for an explanation for the cup's disappearance that doesn't include God. His explanations might include, "Someone was playing a trick on me." "The cup never actually was there." "The cup still is there, and my mind is playing tricks on me."

*"The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time."* Ludwig Wittgenstein

Suppose this scientist really does conclude that the cup has disappeared? If he's like most of us, five minutes after its disappearance he's going to say, "Could that have really happened?" Based on the scientific principle of uniformity of results, he'll re-run the experiment to verify it. So suppose God makes the second cup disappear too? The scientist then publishes his results and others replicate the experiment in their own labs. If the cup doesn't disappear for these scientists, scientist #1 is declared a nutcase, and the whole thing is forgotten. If the cup disappears each and every time, the scientific

community declares that there is a natural phenomenon to account for it and begins developing a new theory of the universe to explain it.

Physical science, by its very nature, can't verify the existence of a spiritual or supernatural being. *Reason*, *history* and *experience* are the only truth-tests that can be applied in a search for a spiritual being, because God Himself is reasonable, claims to have appeared in history and can be experienced by people.

### **I Get to Use My Brain**

As we've previously referenced, the God who created human intellect did not ask us to leave it at the door when it comes to believing in Him. God has scattered evidence of Himself all throughout the world, so no one has to express *blind faith* in God or even merely *sincere faith*. The Bible indicates that, while on earth, humans have a limited capacity to perceive the spiritual realm, but one day we will be able to fully grasp it. It says, "*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.*"<sup>35</sup>

### **What's at Stake?**

Some people seem to have a strong desire to believe in God. They want assurance that they're not alone in the universe. Other people have an equally strong desire to *not* believe in God. The thought of an all-powerful Creator cramps their style. But if there really is a Creator to this universe, then it's His property. In fact, we are His property.

When I was a little guy, my parents built a swimming pool in our yard. Whenever the pool deck got wet, it got slippery, so my parents made up a rule to keep us safe: *No running on the pool deck*. The rule wasn't just for

family members; it was for our guests as well. In all our years of having guests over, no one ever objected to my parents' rule. Why? It was their pool. They built it, they maintained it, and they *owned* it. People knew intuitively that an owner has the right to make reasonable rules and expect guests to follow them.

The decision to believe or not believe in God should not be based on a vested interest. It ought to be based on evidence, experience and reason. How objective are you about weighing the evidence for and against God? The Bible says, "*For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*"<sup>36</sup>

## The Nature of Faith

All humans exercise faith: all humans, all day, every day. When the alarm goes off in the morning, we get up believing that we still have a job to go to. We brush our teeth, believing that it will keep our teeth healthy and alleviate bad breath. At the office, we trust our weight to the chair, believing that it will support us, just like it always has. A client asks a question and we answer it, believing that we understood the question correctly. All human experience is based on faith. We have no absolute assurance of anything, *only belief based on evidence*.

So, when it comes to believing in God, where does the majority of the evidence point? To summarize this week's readings:

- A creation requires a Creator.
- An intelligent design requires an Intelligent Designer.



- A sense of moral standards indicates that there must be a Moral Standards Giver.
- The evidence for Christ's deity says there must be a Deity.
- My personal experience tells me there is a God who loves me.

*Is God real? The Bible says, "Only fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.'... The Lord looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if anyone is truly wise, if anyone seeks God."*<sup>37</sup> If this is true, if there really is a God, then He is here with you now.

# THINKING ABOUT IT

## Something to Chew On:

Everything I do in life, I do by faith.

## Verse to Remember:

*“What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.”* Hebrews 11:1, NLT

## Point to Ponder:

Many of my questions have been answered, but can I ultimately embrace Christianity by faith?

## My Thoughts on the Subject:

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# Sabbath

## **A Day of Rest**

I have found that the best way to digest good material is by switching gears and taking breaks occasionally. Today is one of those days. Ideally, this seventh day of your study falls on Sunday. If so, I recommend you attend a church service today and see what you experience there about the existence of God. See you tomorrow.