

I. Intro

A. Chat

Good morning and a special welcome to all of you who have joined us for our new series called The God Questions. Over these next six weeks we're going to explore real questions that people often ask about God. Although the questions are deep, the answers will often be simple and straightforward. These answers will be based partly on scripture, some on observable facts and others on logic. Either way, my goal is not to get super deep so that I sound intellectual and philosophical. Mainly, because I'm not super intellectual or philosophical. Honestly, the questions that we will explore are the questions that I typically avoid. But these are the questions that most every Christian hopes they don't get asked. We run from these topics.

And if you've ever had one of these conversations with someone who doesn't believe in the God that we serve, you've probably noticed that they are more prepared for the fight than we are. My aim in the next few weeks is not to give you the cheat sheet with all the answers to the test you may one day be faced with, as much as it is to give you starting point that gives you the courage to have God conversations with your friends, co-workers, and neighbors. For those of you who have serious questions about God and are investigating for yourself, I am so excited to dig in and explore with you. For those of you who already have these God talks with your friends, I pray that this further equips you and or provokes you to refine your answers to some of those questions. And to pray to the Father for more compassion for those who carry those questions. And finally, for those of you who just like to learn, this is going to be a great series to worship God with your mind as we learn more about Him.

I encourage you to bring friends every week. Write down questions and comments every week and turn them in using your connection card. And the final week, we will open the floor to live questions and answer any questions

you have in a live Q & A session. I believe this will be a bunch of fun. Are you ready to do some learning today?

B. Perspective Questions

One of my ministry coaches, Hal Seed, has dedicated much of the last 20 years conducting an ongoing survey to determine the questions people ask most about God. A few of the top questions are:

1. Is the Bible true?
2. Don't all roads lead to heaven?
3. How can a good God allow suffering?
4. Which is right: evolution or creation?
5. What happens when I die?

In the next few weeks we plan to cover all of these questions. We could jump right in and start talking about the Bible, heaven, suffering and other religions. But I think that it will be helpful to tackle the most foundational of questions first: ***"Is God Real?"*** If the answer to that question is no, then there's no need to sing songs, dance dances, do good, love enemies. If God is not real just eat, sleep and do you.

II. The Pointers to God's Existence

If you live in America, then my guess is that you or someone very close to you has recently asked this monumental question: Is there really a such thing as a Real Living God. After all, we've been hood-winked by the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus and WWE Wrestling. One day, we were all faced with the harsh reality that all the aforementioned are all NOT REAL.

All of the people and things mentioned above made us feel good. They provided nice stories and nice theories. They became a part of our culture. But they were products of human imagination and fiction. Many people ask the sincere question: Is the god you serve just another product of weak human imagination? To that, I quickly and boldly answer: Absolutely not! He's real. And if you asked Christians to prove it, the difficulty starts. After all, most of us don't conduct experiments, filled with hypotheses or concrete conclusions based on extensive study. But scientists do. Although most modern scientists refute the idea that a supreme, all-powerful Creator God exists. But their scientific conclusions say otherwise.

A. The Teleological Discussion: The existence of “stuff” (physical matter)

Teleologists have gone to great lengths to study (much more than I ever will) and have concluded that everything that exists in the world, evolved from something else. No physical thing explains its own existence. Every physical thing that is, came into being because of some other thing outside of itself influenced it and birthed it. All the Stuff in the universe that exists today, is here because it evolved from something else. All the perfect circumstances, genes and conditions came together at some PERFECT and PRIOR point in time in order for that thing to come exist.

1. Cause and effect: For every effect (every *thing* that exists) there has to be something that *caused* it to exist.
 - a. Apple → Tree → Soil → Nutrients → Irrigation
 - b. Aroma → Spare Ribs → Day Off → Thoughtful Wife → 1 Less Cow

Every effect that we see, is the result of something else. There is not one physical entity that completely explains its own existence. If this theory is scientifically true, then it causes a huge problem for the atheist.

2. Stephen J. Gould

The late Stephen J. Gould, a renowned paleontologist, evolutionary biologist and atheist once made this statement describing how everything just evolved:

"We [humans] are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that transformed into legs for terrestrial creatures; We are here because comets struck the earth and wiped out dinosaurs, thereby giving mammals a chance not otherwise available. Now thank your lucky stars that the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook... We may yearn for a 'higher answer'– but none exists."

Stephen J. Gould

No "Higher Answer"? Somehow all the right circumstances just happened in the right place at just the right time to bring about everything that is. It just happened! Right. And you think I'm crazy for walking by faith?

3. Every Day Faith

The Bible says, *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see"* (**Hebrews 11:1- NIV**).

The truth is that we all use faith every day. You put the key in the ignition of your car, with the faith that all the mechanical dominoes will fall and it will start. You agree to place your hard-earned money in a bank with the faith that when you come back weeks and years later, it'll be there for you. You take confident breaths every second or so, with the certain anticipation that there will be enough air to fill your lungs (yet again). All day long, believers and non-believers alike, utilize faith.

But that doesn't mean that we use faith blindly. I don't know about you, but I investigated something about that car before I used my money on it. And I know the mechanic, so when I put my key in the ignition, I completely believe that it will start. I investigated a little bit about the track record of banks and

credit unions before placing my hard-earned money in it. And when I swipe, history has proven that I can expect some money to magically appear on it. I fully expect there to be enough air in the earth to fill my lungs because I calculated it, and for 42 years there's been enough air. There's a history of air. So my faith is based on reason, facts and experience.

4. Something Out of Nothing?

But back to the teleological theory (the existence of things). If everything that is, owes its existence to something prior to it... Scientists run into a scientific problem when they've traced every physical element back to its prior and more elementary state... and eventually locate the point in time when there was no prior physical entity around to cause the first physical entity that was? You see, evolution works as long as there's something physical to evolve from. But how do you explain how the first piece of physical matter came into existence? In other words, how do you evolve something out of nothing? I think I know how: the mere existence of physical matter which owes its existence and explanation to something prior to it implies that at the end of this evolutionary line there is at least one self-existent, non-physical state of being that caused it. "In the beginning... God". Okay, how did stuff get here? **Ps. 33:6-9:**

- 6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
- 7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.
- 9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm. (**Ps. 33:6-9**)

The mere fact that there is any physical matter at all in the universe, points to the existence of a non-physical entity who exists beyond the universe... beyond space... and beyond time... whose only reason for existence is wrapped up in Himself.

B. Cosmological Discussion: The Nature of Stuff.

Cosmologists study the nature of the cosmos and develop theories and “laws” based on the universe’s characteristics and complexity. If you’re like me, you’re no cosmologist, theologian nor apologist. You may not know Bible trivia or have dozens of verses committed to your memory. And if you and I were asked to prove that “God is Real” on “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” we’d probably have a little problem. But we do get a life line call right? If I had one call to make to an expert, I’d call up to the skies and ask them to help me prove that God is real.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Psalm 19:1)

On any still, starry night the canvas of the sky testifies about the glory of God. The galaxies preach a better sermon than this desert preacher could ever preach. And talk about providing consistent, provocative commentary?

Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:2-4)

Day and night, night and day they proclaim the indisputable truth that God is real and in complete control. They use no human linguistics, yet their voice is heard throughout the galaxies. The universe is so huge, complex and marvelously well-ordered that it rules out the chance and happenstance that everything just happened.

1. The Earth

Let's take the earth, for example. The Earth is masterfully positioned at a perfect distance from the sun, which gives us a manageable temperature range of roughly -30 degrees to +120 degrees. If the Earth were any further away from the sun, we would all freeze. Any closer and we would burn up. Even a fractional variance in the Earth's position to the sun would make life on Earth impossible.

2. Water

Water... it's colorless, odorless and without taste, and yet no living thing can survive without it. Plants, animals and human bodies consist mostly of water. Water has a unique surface tension, which allows it to flow upward (against gravity) inside of plants, bringing life-giving water and nutrients to the top of the tallest trees. Water freezes from the top down and floats, so fish can live under the frozen layer in the winter.

3. The Human Brain

The human brain...simultaneously processes an amazing amount of information. Your brain takes in all the colors and objects you see, the temperature around you, the sounds around you and the dryness of your mouth. Your brain processes all your emotions, thoughts and memories. It actually processes more than a million messages a second, then weighs the importance of all this data and filters out the relatively unimportant.

Maybe I'm crazy but, when I see something as beautiful and complex, it tends to point me to a Creator who's completely independent of the thing it created. You can't convince me that something as beautiful as the galaxies, the pineapples or the human eye just popped into being by accident. It just happened?

4. Big Bang Example: Coke

Have you ever wondered how this Coke got to be the way it is? Where it came from, or how it was formed? Let me tell you about it.

Millennia ago, a massive explosion came out of nothing and nowhere, and sent a gargantuan rock spinning through space. As it cooled, a brown, sweet, bubbly liquid formed on its surface. As time passed, aluminum crept out of the cosmic liquid and shaped itself into these dimensions . . . which just happened to be the right shape and size for a human hand, which would develop a few million years later.

Over time, this thing formed itself a one-time retractable lid, then a crease started to appear a bit off-center on the top of the lid, and out of it grew a pull tab.

Centuries later, red and white, paint fell from the sky and clung to this thing, forming the letters Coke on its surface. Obviously, these 8 letters have a deeper meaning to them, because you see them everywhere. (In fact, if you think about it, you'll realize that this logo is one of the primordial resonance frequencies of the universe. After all, it's everywhere). The really cool part is that the primordial force that generated this pattern even thought to put a little trademark symbol next to it.

Question: What are the odds that something this complex and this coincidentally useful, comfortable, attractive, and might I add delicious (*take a sip*) came about as a result of a random collision of molecules? It's too carefully designed to be chance or coincidence, wouldn't you agree? And this is just a Coke can.

My conclusion? Some very smart people who knew what they were doing did some thinking to come up with this. How did I conclude that? It is only

reasonable to be able to reconstruct certain attributes of the designer by studying his design.

5. The Banana

Now, let's look at a banana.

The far side of a banana has three ridges, and the close side has two ridges. (Usually this is so, but not always, because unlike the Pepsi can designer, the banana designer is innovative and creative and loves variety and didn't want to settle for factory or cookie-cutter replicas. So every banana is unique, but they're all the same in the ways that really matter.)

Notice how neatly the banana fits in my hand. It's kind of like it was made for it. Feel how it's been thoughtfully made with a nonslip 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, dark means . . . banana pudding! The top contains a thoughtfully made pull tab for convenient opening.

Pull firmly on the tab and see how there are perforations on the wrapper (*peel open your banana*) so that it will peel into four pieces and hang gracefully over the hand. This wrapper is environmentally sound, made completely of biodegradable substances that in time enrich the soil it nestles in. If left uneaten, this, like every other fruit, has pre-programmed orders to dissolve into the ground so that a new fruit-bearing plant can gain nutrients from it, making it 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. The banana is full of body-building 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 process easier.

Remember how Psalm 19 said that the heavens declare the glory of God? I would argue that the tropical jungles do, too. They not only declare that God exists, but they give us hints of what He must be like. To design something so intricate and delicate and beautiful and superior as this, whoever created the banana must be smart and thoughtful and creative and superior. He must be loving because He designed His creation around the needs of people like me.

- a. Creation has always pointed to a Creator
 - i. **Romans 1:20:** *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."*

If we would just stop, look around and think we'd see evidence of an intelligent, loving, thoughtful Creator-God.

Here's a third argument for the existence of God. It's called:

C. The Moral Argument: *My sense of right and wrong*

Many people who reject the ideal of a perfect, righteous, sovereign God do so because they see a world that is full of so much evil and unrighteousness. We, as humans, carry a universal sense of right and wrong. Anthropologists tell us that inner morals are a universal phenomenon. Morals vary from person to person and society to society, but *every person* has them.

1. C. S. Lewis Mere Christianity: *"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"*

The fact that we can point out evil, assumes that there is a reference point called good. And here's the interesting part: the fact that we have lofty standards for good does not ensure that we will live them out. Ever notice that some of the meanest, most selfish people, ugly people can point out the ugliness in everybody else. They are not comparing your ugliness to themselves. They have a reference point that is much higher than they could ever reach for. They are comparing your ugliness to the beauty, Holiness, rightness of God.

Anthropologists tell us that all humans have a moral standard that they have never lived up to. Because their moral standard exists outside of them. Their moral standard is higher than them. Their moral standard is greater than them. This moral standard pre-dated them.

III. Conclusion

Today we engaged in a teleological discussion about the existence of God: The mere fact that physical matter exists points to the fact that it was caused by something prior to it. And if all physical matter began at a point where there was nothing physical in which to evolve from, its origin then comes from that which is not physical (or natural) at all.

We had a bit of a cosmological discussion today. We looked the skies, the universe, and the earth... only to marvel at the beauty and complexity of it all. And the sheer beauty, complexity and thoughtfulness in which it is designed seems to point to a beautiful, complex, thoughtful designer.

And lastly, we engaged in a moralistic discussion: The mere fact that all humans have morals that are much higher than their own actions points to a God that is much higher than human action could ever be. There is none that are righteous. There is none that do good. All have sinned and fall short of that glory. But... in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son (Jesus), born of a woman, born into a bad world. Jesus is the ultimate evidence that God is real. He was Good, in a bad world. Without sin, without blemish, without issues. He is the physical manifestation of the moralistic standard that we hold, yet can never reach. He's good. Good Shepherd. Good Teacher. Good Healer. Good Redeemer. If the acknowledgement of bad, pre-supposes that there is a perfect, flawless, selfless good that serves as the reference point, it sounds like a pretty good description of God to me. And Jesus is the greatest evidence this world has ever received that God is real. Will you believe Him?