

Andy Crouch Video...Gailey plays...What you have just experienced is a powerful argument for the existence of God. Today we take up the second of seven important questions in our Explore God series, "Is There A God?" What we have just experienced together is one of many arguments for the existence of God. When we feel wonder or joy or even longing - where does that come from? Does a poodle ponder a sunset or a snail write a symphony? Why do we have this deep inner longing that we grasp for a moment in a painting or song. "If we find in ourselves a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, it is possible that we were made for another world." Could there be a Satisfier at the end of our search for satisfaction?

There are a number of arguments for the existence of God none more convincing than the fact that the Texas Rangers are in first place! But this morning I want to consider the evidence for the existence of God in three broad categories:

1. Consider the historical evidence. It is pretty obvious that, over the course of 3,500 years of human civilization, virtually every culture has some concept of god. These gods may vary in detail but it seems there is something in the human heart that reaches beyond this world for something powerful and transcendent. Blaise Pascal, the French mathematician and philosopher of the 18th century asked, "What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself." Pascal puts forth the notion that there is a God-shaped vacuum in every human heart.

2. Consider the moral argument. All humans seem to have some sort of moral compass. Some of the earliest writings discovered are moral codes. And if you study them closely there are similarities between all of them. Even the most liberal moral relativist who rejects the Christian god believes in human rights and the liberation of oppressed people. The bumper sticker of the moral relativist might read, "Liberate the oppressed but sleep with whomever you want." But if morality is relative then why isn't social justice? Still, it seems that everyone carries within them some sort of moral code. Where does the sense of right and wrong come from? Could there be a Law-giver?

This sense of right and wrong found in human beings that is absent in animals. Author Annie Dillard got away from it all and sat by a creek for a year in Virginia to be inspired and refreshed by nature. As she looked closely she came to discover that nature is ruled by one simple principle – violence of the strong against the weak. In her book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, she says, “There is not a person in the world who behaves as badly as a praying mantis. ‘But wait,’ you say, ‘There’s not right or wrong in nature. Right and wrong is a human concept.’ Precisely! We are moral creatures in an amoral world...Or, consider the alternate...it is only human feeling that is freakishly amiss... alright then - it is our emotions that are amiss. We are freaks, the world is fine, and let us all go have lobotomies to restore us to a natural state. We can leave the library then, go back to the creek lobotomized and live on its banks as untroubled as any muskrat or reed. You first.”

C. S. Lewis was an atheist who could not explain this sense of “oughtness” he had within himself. The moral evidence for God led Him on a search to know God.

3. Consider the natural evidence. In the late 1700’s William Paley argued that the complexity of the universe reveals a designer or a Divine Watchmaker. He said if I strike my foot on a rock I could assume the rock was always there. But if I find a pocket watch I would have to assume the watch had a maker. The watchmaker had a purpose for the watch, a design to address that purpose and the ability to construct the watch.

We live in a universe that is fine-tuned. Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, was an atheist. Through his scientific study he became convinced that everything he was seeing pointed to the God of the Bible. “When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants; example, the gravitational constant, various constants about strong and weak nuclear force, etc. that have precise values. If any one of those constants was off by even one part in a million or in some cases one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it today. Matter would not have been able to coalesce.” The quality of gravity is the same throughout the universe. If it were stronger it would draw all matter into a black hole and disappear. If it were weaker matter would spread out throughout the universe and there would be not stars, planets or people.

Nature is predictably regular. Water boils at the same temperature today that it will tomorrow. There is no reason for that. Why don't things change from day to day? We regulate our lives based on the regularity in nature. Maybe there is a Regulator, someone who keeps things operating the same way every day. That was the conclusion of people like Kepler, Galileo and Isaac Newton as they developed systems based on a Creator who regulates the universe.

So as King David once observed, God is revealed in what He created. Ps. 19:1-2 says,
“The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.”

A more recent poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning said it this way, “Earth is crammed with Heaven and every flowering bush afire with God. But only those who see take off their shoes, all the rest just sit ‘round and pluck blackberries.”

But the creation alone does not provide answers to some of our deepest questions about the nature of God. There is another possible source of information about God that goes beyond general revelation through nature or history or morality. It is specific revelation about God. The interesting thing about the Bible is that it ASSUMES the existence of God. Gen. 1:1, “In the beginning, God.”

In Romans 1, there is a warning given about the consequences of ignoring the evidence for God...1:19-23. The writer says that what is known about God is plain, manifest, obvious. God has actually revealed Himself through what He has made. God implants or embeds His invisible qualities in what is visible. We don't start with myth and feeling but we start to Explore God by observing the physical world. Obviously you need faith to believe that what you are seeing actually points to God but even those who believe the universe came into being apart from God are required to exercise faith. Let's say man is merely a produce of time and chance. Well, chance is invisible. So is time. Even natural selection is entirely invisible. So either way you have to make a leap of faith at some point in time unless you are just intellectually lazy.

The issue is not whether there is enough evidence for God. The issue is what is this God up to? What does He expect of me? Am I am accountable to my Creator? If I pursue God I may discover that there is not only evidence for His existence but He has established moral laws just as He has physical laws by which I either cooperate or suffer the consequences. So I can either take off my shoes and worship or I can suppress the truth and invent a god that is more to my liking. It has been said that God created man in His own image and we have been returning the favor ever since.

But there is a warning here in Ro. 1:18 – To suppress the truth about God is dangerous. There are some serious implications to suppressing the truth about a big all-powerful being who can eliminate me at any moment. It would be wise to Explore Him and then try to get on the right side of His nature. Annie Dillard concludes the matter this way, "Why do we people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute?...On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return."

So how should I respond to all of this? Jesus, who claimed to be the ultimate revelation of God, extended a simple invitation to all people – ASK.

Ask – ask God to reveal His presence in your life. You may get more than you asked for. In *The Furious Longing of God*, Brennan Manning tells an amazing story about Arnold Palmer. Years ago, Palmer was invited to play a series of exhibition matches in Saudi Arabia. The king was so impressed with the golfer that he offered him a gift. Not realizing that gift giving is central to Saudi hospitality, Palmer politely declined. The king was extremely displeased, so Palmer reconsidered: "Well, how about a golf club? A golf club would be a wonderful memento of my visit here." The king was delighted.

The following day, a messenger delivered to Palmer's hotel the title deed to a golf club with 36 holes, trees, lakes, and buildings. (from Jim Denison, 8/29)
Ask!

Seek – spend some time trying to understand. Read the gospel of John. Go to Explore God website. *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller. *Can Man Live Without God?* by Ravi Zacharias. *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. The prophet Jeremiah spoke for God when He said, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord.”

Knock – Join a discussion group. Call us. We’ll have one of our pastors sit down with you over a cup of coffee and interact with some of these things. Nothing is more important both in this life and the life beyond than what you believe about God.

“All that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy... The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other.” C. S. Lewis