

# Chapter 4

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## Reasons to Believe

If you are like most people, you have struggled with the question of God's existence and more specifically the truth of the Bible. The purpose of this chapter is to help you understand why I believe in the God of the Bible, and in so doing help you to believe as well.

One of the main reasons many people do not believe in God is that God seems to operate behind the scenes. He hides Himself from us, and does not seem to answer our prayers. Imagine, for a minute what life might be like if God did visibly appear to all of us and we could see Him watching over everything we do, even things we do in secret. Now, further imagine what it would be like if God brought down the hammer and immediately whacked us on the side of the head every time we violated one of His rules or even entertained an unwholesome thought. Further imagine what it would be like if God were to instantly reward every good thought and action with a tangible reward. If that were the case, then our primary motivation for being good would be self-interest. We would be like Pavlov's dogs, who's responses were conditioned solely by external stimuli. Selfless, self-sacrificing *Agape* love could not exist in such an environment.

Another reason people find it hard to believe in God is related to the above. They cannot understand why a loving and powerful God would allow so much sin, suffering and evil to exist. The freedom that God gives us to make our own choices in life, without direct coercion from above, is like a two-sided coin. One side of the coin would represent the negative experiences of life, with the other side of the coin representing the positive experiences that would not be possible if those negative experiences did not exist. Negative experiences help us in two ways.

First they provide a backdrop which enables us to see and appreciate the positive. For example, light is accentuated by darkness. Love is most appreciated when one is most in need of it. The greater the offense, the greater the impact of a pardon. The greater the hurt, the more soothing the relief. The greater the sorrow, the greater the joy when the sorrow ends. Every single positive feeling or emotion is made possible and enhanced by the existence of its opposite.

The second way negative experiences help us is by the lessons learned. We cannot learn patience without trials. We cannot give sacrificially without sacrifice. We cannot learn to forgive if there are no offenses. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Romans 5:20, "*The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.*" In another place, He said, "*For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all*" (Rom. 11:32). Selfless, self-sacrificing *Agape* love could not exist in world that is free from sin, suffering and evil.

So far, I have attempted to remove a couple of obstacles to belief in God. Now I would like to turn your attention to some reasons to believe. Please keep in mind that I will not be presenting

irrefutable proofs of God's existence. For me, however, the evidence is so strong as to leave no room for reasonable doubt.

The best evidence of the existence of God, in my view, results from a process of "deductive" reasoning whereby conclusions are deduced from universally accepted scientific facts and historical truths. An example of this kind of reasoning would be calculating the probability of certain natural processes occurring without divine, supernatural intervention. According to Dr. Hugh Ross, a highly respected astrophysicist and pastor, the mathematical probability of even one planet existing in the universe which is capable of supporting life is much less than one chance in a hundred thousand trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion. A probability that small is for all practical purposes zero. Dr. Ross lists 75 criteria that must be satisfied for a planet to be capable of supporting life. He then calculates the probability of each of those criteria of existing in any one planet. If just one of those 75 criteria were not satisfied, then life would be impossible. When you multiply the 75 individual probabilities, you arrive at the probability of a planet existing that could support life. You will find these 75 criteria listed, along with their respective probability factors, on Dr. Ross' website [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org).

Using simple mathematical formulas, probabilities can also be calculated for other natural processes occurring without divine intervention, such as the creation of life on this planet or its evolution into higher forms. These probabilities are so infinitesimally small that they are basically zero. It would logically follow then, that the probability of the intelligent design of our universe, the planet Earth, and life on Earth, is infinitely great and for all practical purposes certain.

Additional scientific evidence for the existence of God may be found in the study of quantum mechanics and general relativity. Many scientists, especially theoretical physicists, are coming to realize that we don't actually live in a physical, material world, but a supernatural world instead. Their belief in a natural world, subject only to the natural laws of Newtonian physics, has given way the idea that the world we observe and experience consists solely of immaterial waves that may be described only as probabilities and possibilities, and do not "collapse" into reality unless observed by conscious observers. This lends support to the idea that we are, in a manner of speaking, spiritual, rather than physical beings. Later in this book this subject will be explored in greater detail. Belief in the supernatural makes it much easier for me to believe in a supernatural, immaterial, creator God.

The testimony of people who have experienced near death experiences (NDE's) provides strong evidence that God exists, and also gives us valuable insights into the reality of an afterlife in Heaven. The evidence for the reality and genuineness of these experiences is in my view irrefutable, and will be covered in more detail in a later chapter of this book.

Various polls have revealed that the vast majority of people on earth share my belief in the existence of God, but most do not believe in the divine inspiration of the Christian Scriptures. And that brings us to the second part of this chapter. Are the Christian Scriptures divinely inspired by God, and do we find within their pages reliable information about God's nature and how we may relate to Him.

My belief in the truth of the Christian Bible has been reinforced throughout my life by my own experiences of God working in my life and the lives of those around me, but the foundation of my belief includes both scientific and historical evidence. A powerful case for the truth of the Christian Scriptures can be made from historical evidence. In a court of law the guilt or innocence of the person on trial is supported by historical evidence. Known historical facts are corroborated by eye witnesses to “prove” the case. In the case of the Scriptures, there are many historical events which are universally accepted even by skeptics. We know that most of the original apostles, and many of their closest followers, suffered intense persecution and martyrdom for what they believed to be the truth of the resurrection, of which they were actual eye witnesses. It is much easier for me to believe the truth of their claims than to believe that they deliberately lied about it for personal advantage.

While I don’t believe in the inerrancy of the Christian Scriptures, I do believe they were divinely inspired. Much of the Bible consists of stories, legends, sayings, and actual historical events that were handed down verbally for many years, and in some cases centuries, before they were written down. Even after taking written form they were subject to later additions and embellishments by well-meaning redactionists who exercised a form of poetic license with respect to the literal truth, in order to teach theological truths from their unique perspectives in history. This in my view doesn’t make the Scriptures less true from a theological standpoint. It does, however, create problems when we base certain aspects of our theology on a literal interpretation of passages which might not be accurate in the objective historical sense.

For example, It may well be that the writers and editors of the Genesis accounts believed that the creation of the cosmos, including all mankind, occurred over a period of six literal 24-hour days. It is not necessary for us today to believe this in order to accept the underlying truth that God is, after all, still the creator of everything. At the same time, I would be careful not to develop a doctrine of original sin and/or the moral and spiritual depravity of mankind solely on a literal interpretation of the Genesis account, or to blame everything on Satan, who took the form of a serpent in the mythical Garden of Eden.

Another historical argument for the truth of the Scriptures, and the New Testament in particular, would be that there is no other good explanation for the influence of Christianity on subsequent human history. The following is an adaptation taken from a sermon by Dr. James Allan Francis in “The Real Jesus and Other Sermons,” c. 1926, by the Judson Press of Philadelphia (pp 123-124 titled “Arise Sir Knight!”):

### ***One Solitary Life***

*Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.*

*He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...*

*While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.*

*Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.*

*I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.*

Another type of historical evidence for the validity of the Scriptures would be the application of common sense and logic to the testimony of Jesus Christ himself and his followers. Even unbelievers regard Jesus as a great moral teacher, probably the greatest of all time. But if Jesus were only a great moral teacher, and not really the Messiah and the Son of God He claimed to be, He would have been very deceitful or a lunatic, hardly the description of a man who forever changed the course of history and has been worshipped by billions of people since his death. In the words of C.S. Lewis (from his book, *Mere Christianity*), “*A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic-on the level with the 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.*”

Another reason I believe in the truth of the Christian Scriptures is that in actual practice Christianity works amazingly well for those who devote their lives to its teachings. Christian prayer has the power to dramatically transform and improve our lives, and many who convert to Christianity are rescued from the bondage of fear, unhappiness, and self-destructive lifestyles.

During my investigations over the past 10 years, I studied many extra-biblical sources of truth, including Near Death Experiences (NDE), world religions, paranormal experiences, quantum physics, mysticism, ancient and modern philosophy, and so on. After all that, I have concluded that the Christian Scriptures contain the absolute highest expression of human ideals, the noblest of which is unconditional, sacrificial love for all mankind, which is embodied in the God of the Bible and the life, teachings, and character of Jesus Christ.