



**ANSWERS TO LIFE'S 7  
MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS**

**ROBERT JEFFRESS**

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## THE AUTHOR

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Robert Jeffress is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. His bold, biblical, and practical approach to ministry has made him one of America's most respected evangelical leaders. Vision America honored Jeffress in 2006 with the Daniel Award for his steadfast commitment and boldness in proclaiming the uncompromising Word of God.

Jeffress is the author of multiple books, including *How Can I Know?* (Worthy, 2012) and the Bible study *Free to Forgive* (LifeWay, 2000). He is the host of the radio and television program "Pathway to Victory." Jeffress is frequently seen on CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC, having been interviewed on more than eight hundred radio and television programs.

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# INTRODUCTION

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In many ways the message of the gospel is both wonderfully clear and astonishingly positive. There's a God who created the universe, and He wants to have a relationship with human beings in spite of our sin and rebellion against Him. Moreover, He offers us salvation and eternal life in paradise at the expense of His own death and resurrection, and all we must do to accept these gifts is believe and follow Him.

That's good news indeed!

Throughout history millions of men and women, myself included, have embraced that message as true. We've accepted God's gift, making it the very center of our lives. Perhaps you've done the same.

Yet sometimes we doubt.

In spite of everything we've experienced and all the evidence in support of Christian doctrine, questions creep in and settle darkly in the backs of our minds. Can we really be sure the Bible is true? Can we really claim that Christianity is right and all other religions are wrong? Can God really be good, given all the suffering in the world? Can we even be sure He exists?

If you've ever wrestled with those kinds of questions, as I have, take a deep breath. If you're wrestling with those kinds of questions even now, try to relax. The gospel has deep, life-changing implications; therefore, it naturally generates deep and thought-provoking questions. It's normal.

At the same time, take heart in the fact that such questions have answers you can understand and apply in your everyday life. That's the goal of this study: to help you discover God's answers to the most important questions in life. As you complete this study, commit to remain open to the truth God wants to reveal to you through His Word and be ready to walk forward in the power of that truth.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS STUDY

1. **Attend** each group experience.
2. **Watch** the DVD teaching.
3. **Participate** in the group discussions.
4. **Complete** the content in this workbook.
5. **Read** the daily lessons and complete the learning activities.
6. **Memorize** each week's suggested memory verse.
7. **Be honest** with yourself and others about your thoughts, your questions, and even your doubts as you study the material.
8. **Ask God** to show you His truth about each topic so that you can be confident about what you believe and why you believe it.

WEEK 1

**HOW CAN I KNOW  
THERE IS A GOD?**

## WEEK 1 • GROUP EXPERIENCE

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### START

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WELCOME TO THIS SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION OF *HOW CAN I KNOW?*

To facilitate introductions and introduce the theme of *How Can I Know?* spend a few moments talking as a group about questions in general. Share some questions you dread being asked and a few questions you enjoy being asked.

What images or ideas come to mind when you hear the word *doubt*? Why?

In your experience what are the primary factors that cause people to doubt the existence of God?

Read these verses aloud in preparation for viewing the DVD segment.

Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

**JOHN 20:24-25**

## WATCH

---

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING VIEWER GUIDE AS YOU WATCH DVD SESSION 1.

### Why People Doubt the Existence of God

1. \_\_\_\_\_ doubts
2. \_\_\_\_\_ doubts
3. \_\_\_\_\_ doubts
4. \_\_\_\_\_ doubts
5. \_\_\_\_\_ doubts

The idea that you can't reconcile a belief in science with a belief in God is based on \_\_\_\_\_ reasoning.

It's a profound mistake to allow scientists to equate science with \_\_\_\_\_ and to limit science to what I can see, measure, and replicate.

There's a difference between proof and \_\_\_\_\_.

### Evidence for the Existence of God

1. \_\_\_\_\_ evidence: Why is there \_\_\_\_\_ rather than nothing?

The naturalist's explanation of the origin of the universe:  
no one × nothing = \_\_\_\_\_.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ evidence: How do you explain the complex \_\_\_\_\_ of the universe if there is no divine Designer?

• In the \_\_\_\_\_ • In the \_\_\_\_\_ • In the \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ evidence: How do you explain \_\_\_\_\_ if there is no divine Designer?

• Our \_\_\_\_\_ • Our \_\_\_\_\_ • Our \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ evidence: Why do people keep \_\_\_\_\_ God if He doesn't exist?

Ever since the resurrection, millions of people in every corner of the globe have claimed to have an experience with \_\_\_\_\_ .



## RESPOND

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USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS THE TEACHING FROM THE DVD SEGMENT.

What did you like most about Pastor Jeffress's teaching? Why?

Respond to Pastor Jeffress's statement: "It's just hard to believe in anything or anyone we haven't seen before."  
Do you believe it's common for Christians to experience moments of doubt about the existence of God? Explain.

Describe any recent encounters you've had with people who profess to be atheists. What emotions did you experience during those encounters?

Briefly review the five reasons people doubt the existence of God.  
Which of these reasons do you find most understandable? Why?

Briefly review the different types of evidence for the existence of God. Which evidence do you find most compelling? Why? What have you experienced personally that argues for the existence of God?

**Application.** Make an effort this week to solicit the opinions of several people about the existence of God—through conversations, videos, books, the Internet, and so on. Keep track of ideas or arguments that seem interesting or surprising.

**Scripture.** Memorize Jude 22-23 this week.

**Assignment.** Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group experience.

### **THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE MEMORY**

Have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

**JUDE 22-23**

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### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

There's no end to the number of questions in the world today. "What time is it?" "How much does that cost?" "Do you want fries with that?" Questions can be attached to and drawn from any subject at any time.

Even so, some questions are more important than others. "Will you marry me?" has a lot more impact and potential reverberations than "What time should I pick you up for dinner?" That's obvious, of course, but it leads to some interesting implications. Because if some questions are more important than others, could there be a question that's more important than all others? Could we identify the most important question in the world?

I think so. I even think I know what that question would be: "How can I know there is a God?" My answer to that question will impact every other decision, action, and experience in my life. The same is true for you—for everyone. Our interactions with God (or lack thereof) are far and away the most important things about us.

Notice the question isn't "Does God exist?" That's also an important query, but it's too general. Vultures and societies have grappled with that question for centuries, and we'll discuss the results of those pursuits this week. But we'll be best served by keeping things personal. How can *we* know individually and experientially that God exists?

Let's start finding an answer.

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Day 1  
**WHY WE DOUBT**

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Have you ever doubted the existence of God? I know that's a personal question and a rather deep subject, but this is the first day of a deep and personal Bible study, so I think the question is appropriate. In fact, I think it's necessary. Coming to grips with your own beliefs and reservations about God will allow you to make the most of this week's material.

Have you ever doubted the existence of God? Explain your answer.

What typically causes you concern when it comes to the existence of God? What sparks your doubts?

Whether or not we're willing to admit it, most of us have wondered about the existence of God. Certainly I have. In fact, I'd go so far as to say the only people who never doubt are those who never really think. I like what Mark Buchanan has written on the subject:

The depth of our doubt is roughly proportional to the depth of our faith. Those with strong faith have equally strong doubts. That principle bears out in the other direction as well: People with a trivial and shallow faith usually have trivial and shallow doubts.<sup>1</sup>

This is a study for people who think deeply and sincerely about God and the implications of His existence for every facet of their lives. This study is also for people who have doubts, who feel they don't always have the right answers to the important questions of life—questions like “How do you know the Bible is true?” “How can you say Christianity is the only true religion?” “How can you be sure about life after death?” And many more.

Let's start by examining four major sources of doubt that cause people—both Christians and non-Christians—to question the reality of God.

## NATURAL DOUBTS

First, people have natural doubts about the existence of an invisible God who never seems to make an appearance in or a physical impression on the modern world. And those doubts are understandable. After all, we're naturally skeptical about the reality of other invisible beings that are given a place in our culture—Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, the tooth fairy, and so on.

It doesn't help that the Bible records several examples of God's physically manifesting Himself thousands of years ago. After all, if it's really true that He visibly appeared to people in ancient cultures, people naturally wonder why He won't do the same today.

Read the following passages of Scripture and record the different ways God physically manifested Himself in the past.

Genesis 3:8-13

Exodus 13:21-22

John 1:1-14

What explanations have you heard about why God no longer manifests Himself in these ways? What's your opinion?

When we're affected by these natural doubts, we're like Thomas, a man who walked and talked with Jesus for three years yet still doubted when the chips were down:

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Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

**JOHN 20:24-25**

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Jesus understood those doubts. The next time He saw Thomas, Jesus wasn't angry. Rather, He encouraged the disciple to poke and prod Him as much as he needed.

The same is true for us. God not only understands but also empathizes with the natural challenge of committing our lives to someone we've never seen. That's why these words are tucked away near the end of the New Testament: "Have mercy on some, who are doubting" (Jude 22).

What kind of experience would permanently erase all doubt from your mind about the existence of God?

What would enable you to press forward as a follower of God without such an experience?

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## PHILOSOPHICAL DOUBTS

Some people doubt the existence of God on philosophical grounds. They've encountered intellectual arguments that seem to logically rule out any possibility God could be real.

Some of these arguments are silly, such as asking whether God can make a rock so big that He can't lift it. Others, however, are deadly serious because they connect with our experience both intellectually and emotionally, such as the conflict between God's goodness and the prominence of evil and suffering in the world.

What philosophical arguments against the existence of God have you encountered?

What's your response to such arguments?

There are answers to any philosophical argument against God, many of which we'll address in this study. But we also need to remember that philosophical discussions are based on human wisdom and understanding, both of which are flawed. Even Paul, an

accomplished philosopher in his own right, affirmed that intellectual arguments go only so far in matters of faith:

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Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

**1 CORINTHIANS 1:20-21**

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## **EXPERIENTIAL DOUBTS**

Arguments and debates go only so far, and the reality is that most people tend to be prisoners of their own experiences. When people grow up in a family that doesn't believe in God, for example, they're more likely to question the existence of a divine Being. The same is true when we feel we've been hurt by God—when we decide He's let us down or disappointed us in some way.

How have family and personal experiences influenced your thoughts on the reality of God?

When our experiences cause us to doubt God's existence or His goodness, we demonstrate a connection with many men and women in the Bible. Perhaps the most familiar is the apostle Peter.

Read Matthew 14:22-33. What were the causes of Peter's doubts?

When have you cried out to Jesus in the midst of difficult circumstances? What happened?

## EMPIRICAL DOUBTS

Recent decades have seen the rise of a group of authors and speakers often referred to as the new atheists. Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris are popular examples, although there are many others. These men and women believe science has driven the final nail into God's coffin, and their arguments have successfully produced doubt in a number of believers and nonbelievers alike.

The basic tenet of these new atheists is that science has replaced God as the cause and explanation of all things. They support their claims by trumpeting the scientific method—which requires the observation and testing of a hypothesis in nature—as the only legitimate way to find answers. In other words, only what can be observed and measured in nature can qualify as a scientific explanation of why things are the way they are.

Unfortunately for the new atheists, their method amounts to circular reasoning. To say that only things observable in the natural world have value effectively eliminates any discussion of God, who is supernatural by nature. In effect, people who base their reasoning on naturalism say, “God can't be the Creator of the universe, because my belief system doesn't allow for the existence of a God who could create the universe.”

We'll address these views and more in the days to come.

In modern culture where do you encounter  
empirical doubts about the reality of God?

How have you been affected by scientific theories  
and ideas when contemplating the existence of God?

As I said earlier, most of us who follow Jesus experience doubt many times throughout our lives, whether those doubts are natural, philosophical, experiential, or empirical. But such doubts don't have to define us, nor do they in any way disqualify us from serving God. Rather, as we'll see throughout this study, honestly addressing our doubts can spark some of our most memorable and transformational experiences with our Creator.

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Day 2

## THE REAL REASON WE DOUBT

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Go into any toy store these days, and you'll come across a wide variety of electronic playthings in all sorts of shapes, sizes, and structures. You'll see robotic cars and trains, even helicopters that hover and fly. You'll see motorized dogs, cats, spiders, rats, birds, and more. You'll find futuristic robots with lights that flash like laser weapons, and you'll find baby dolls that crawl, sit up, and cry.

On the surface these toys are vastly different. They're diverse in form and function, appearance and action. But if you removed the exteriors and looked at the inner workings to learn what really drives these toys, you'd find them to be fairly similar. Underneath the external differences lies the same bundle of wires, motors, and circuit boards.

I think something similar is at play when it comes to our doubts and fears about the existence of God.

Yesterday we looked at four sources of those doubts: natural, philosophical, experiential, and empirical. On the surface these doubts look and feel very different. We may struggle with one type for years without being afflicted by the others. Or we may bounce back and forth on a regular cycle.

Which of these sources of doubt afflicts you most? Why?

What effect does this doubt have on your relationship with God?

Although all of our doubts about God might appear different, below the surface I believe a common motivation drives them. Decades of experience as a pastor have taught me that most people reject or question God because of spiritual rather than intellectual reasons.

## SPIRITUAL DOUBTS

When we're confronted by people who deny the existence of God, such as the new atheists I mentioned yesterday, we often think of them as intellectual giants who've examined all the philosophical and scientific evidence for God and, after much deliberation, concluded that He can't and doesn't exist. They're so assured in their claims, so biting in their criticisms, that we feel they must have found some secret arrow capable of shooting down any argument. So we begin to doubt.

What emotions do you experience when you hear people attack the existence of God? Why?

Here's a secret: such a view of atheists is false. They haven't spent their time scouring the cosmos in search of evidence for God's existence. Rather, like the motorized toys I described, those who fervently deny God are driven by hidden motivations that reside below the surface.

The apostle Paul helped us understand these motivations thousands of years ago when he wrote Romans 1. He was writing about people who refused to acknowledge the superiority of God over idols and other created objects of worship, but his words also apply to those today who refuse to acknowledge God's presence at all.

To start, Paul reminded his readers that the evidence for God's existence and creative power is overwhelming when we look at creation itself:

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The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

**ROMANS 1:18-20**

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How have you been struck by the evidence of a Creator  
that you've observed in the natural world?

What can we learn about God's character by looking at His creation?

Paul's words have been proved over and over again by human behavior. For thousands of years, cultures and civilizations have looked at the world and become convinced of the existence of a Creator. The people in those cultures and civilizations all responded with various forms of worship.

Only recently have people been willing to deny the presence of a divine Creator in spite of the overwhelming evidence from creation:

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Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**ROMANS 1:21**

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The question we need to ask is why. If all people have received a general knowledge of God through His creation, why do some choose to intentionally ignore that knowledge? Why do some choose to reject it?

The answer is that acknowledging the existence of a divine Creator means admitting that we are created beings. If we are the product of a Creator, it's only reasonable to conclude that we must submit to Him—something many people in today's world are unwilling to do. Again, the majority of those who deny the existence of God have made that decision without honestly looking for evidence of God. In fact, an atheist has no more interest in finding God than a thief has in finding a police officer!

What's your reaction to the previous statements? Why?

What, if anything, caused you to delay following Jesus once you heard the message of the gospel? How was that delay resolved?

As Paul asserted, those who deny God deliberately reject the evidence for God that exists all around them. But they don't stop there. Not content simply to reject the truth of God, they replace that truth with their own ideas:

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Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

**ROMANS 1:22-23**

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Again, Paul was writing about people who rejected the truth of God in favor of religious idols. But his words ring true for people today who deny the existence of God and instead base their lives on the idols of secularism, science, and self. In other words, our culture is actively working to transform God into a deity more to its liking.

Where do you see evidence of modern society rejecting the truth of God in favor of idols that are more palatable?

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## **DOUBTS OF CONVENIENCE**

You know the old saying that pointing a finger at someone leaves three fingers pointing back at us? It applies here. We can easily focus on how atheists deny God or attempt to reshape Him in order to avoid acknowledging His rightful station as Creator. Truth be told, however, those who follow God often do the same thing.

Where do you see evidence of the church ignoring the truth of God in favor of idols that are more palatable?

Where do you see evidence of the same thing happening in your life?

I said earlier that those who think deeply and honestly about God will have doubts from time to time, and that's true. Sometimes, however, our doubts arise not from honest contemplation but from convenience. Sometimes it's easier to hold on to our doubts and attempt to straddle the fence between belief and unbelief because making a final decision would require us to jump in with both feet on one side of that fence or the other.

When it comes to our commitment to God, straddling the fence is always a bad idea.

Read the following passages of Scripture and record what they teach about halfheartedly following God.

Matthew 7:21-23

Romans 2:1-8

Revelation 3:14-18

Whatever the source of our doubts—natural, philosophical, experiential, empirical, or spiritual—we must never become comfortable with them. We must never indulge them as an excuse to avoid taking a stand. Rather, we must confront those doubts and seek the truth in order to make a choice: will we follow God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (see Mark 12:30), or will we reject Him in favor of our own path?

Those are the only available options.

Are you holding on to any doubts that keep you from making a wholehearted commitment to God? If so, what are they?

Spend time in prayer today submitting your doubts to God. Ask Him to help you reach a point of resolution and greater commitment to Him as you continue your study this week.

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Day 3  
**PROVING GOD**

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What does it take to prove something in modern society? Different standards are at work in different venues.

In a court of law, for example, proving someone guilty of a crime requires prosecutors to make a case that convinces jurors beyond a reasonable doubt. In a civil case, however, verdicts are made based on the preponderance of evidence, meaning jurors can make decisions about which way the evidence points most heavily, even if they have doubts. And in the court of public opinion, sometimes a rumor is all that's needed for people to act as judge, jury, and executioner.

When we turn our attention to debating the reality of God, we must concede one point to the naturalists: it's impossible to definitively prove the existence of a supernatural, invisible Being. At the same time, there's a significant difference between proof and evidence. So although we can't scientifically prove the existence of God, we can look at the evidence around us that strongly argues for it. That's what we'll do the remainder of this week.

What evidence have you found convincing  
when contemplating the existence of God?

The amount of evidence pointing to the existence of a divine Creator is staggering. It's overwhelming. There's no way we can even scratch the surface in the limited space available for this study. Therefore, my goal isn't to offer a doubt-smothering mountain of facts. Rather, I want to highlight some of the strongest pieces of evidence and give you a platform from which you can jump into a deeper, lifelong exploration.

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**COSMOLOGICAL EVIDENCE**

Spend a few moments observing your surroundings. Look for large structures and small objects, simple items and complex ones. If you're inside, find a window and look out at the natural world. Observe the similarities and differences between the things made by people and the things found in nature. As you observe, record some notes about what you see.

Identify things you see that weren't made by people. How are they different from things that were made by people?

For those who deny the existence of God, the explanation for everything you've just observed can be summed up by the following equation: no one  $\times$  nothing = everything. If such an idea seems absurd to you, then you've already recognized the importance of cosmological evidence when it comes to the reality of God.

Simply put, the existence of a vast, complicated, unfathomable universe strongly suggests that someone brought that universe into existence. It points to the presence of a Creator.

Consider the Milky Way galaxy, for example. Scientists estimate it contains more than one hundred billion stars. I think we gain a better appreciation for such a staggering number when we see the zeros, so here goes: the Milky Way contains 100,000,000,000 stars. That's our local corner of the universe. And the Milky Way is just one of hundreds of billions of galaxies in the universe!

What's your reaction to the previous numbers? Why?

Because of the immensity of the cosmos, scientific consensus for centuries was that the universe had to be eternal—without beginning or end. The reasoning was simple. If the universe had a beginning, there would need to be something (or Someone) outside the universe that began it. There would need to be a Creator. And any Being able to create something as shockingly massive as the universe would have to be infinitely powerful.

Unfortunately for atheists, science has now demonstrated that the universe did in fact have a beginning—what's commonly referred to as the big bang. The evidence for such a beginning is substantial, including the second law of thermodynamics, the cosmic background radiation discovered by the COBE satellite, the continued expansion of the universe observed by Edwin Hubble, and much more.

All of this evidence points not only to a beginning for the universe but also to a cause. And because the universe consists of time, space, matter, and energy, whatever caused the universe must transcend time, space, matter, and energy. In other words, it must be God.

In what ways does Scripture support the idea that creation had a definite beginning?

Maybe you've heard someone ask, "If there's a God, why doesn't He reveal Himself so that everyone can believe in Him?" Maybe you've asked that question yourself. But the truth is that God *has* revealed Himself in the world. The existence of everything in the cosmos is a direct statement from God and a towering mountain of evidence for His existence.

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## TELEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The universe is more than a vast mass of gas, stars, and random planets. It's also incredibly complex, built layer by layer over the framework of universal laws that are both observable and repeatable. This kind of order and apparent design in the universe is often referred to as the teleological argument for God. (The word *teleos* means *design*.)

Such evidence for design can be found all over the universe, but we don't need to look any farther than our own planet. Indeed, scientists have identified a number of specific conditions that make the earth uniquely suited for human life.

One such condition is the size of the earth. If our planet were slightly smaller or larger, its atmosphere couldn't support the proper mixture of oxygen and nitrogen to maintain life. In addition, that atmosphere is composed of about 21 percent oxygen. If that percentage were higher, fires would spontaneously ignite around the planet; if it were smaller, we would suffocate. Even our location in the solar system is tuned to produce life. If the earth were slightly closer to the sun, we'd burn up; if it were slightly farther away, we'd freeze.

There are more than 120 universal laws and constants that are finely tuned to support life on earth. If *only one* of those constants were changed, human beings couldn't exist.

In your own words, summarize what the teleological argument contributes to the debate over the existence of God.

Here's what God had to say about all this through His servant David:

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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.

**PSALM 19:1-2**

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Read these Scriptures and record how they contribute to your understanding of the universe as a reflection of God's presence.

Job 38:1-18

John 1:1-3

Hebrews 11:3

Imagine you discover a secluded bungalow while on vacation. As you enter, you notice that your favorite foods have been prepared and are waiting for you on the table. On a bookshelf you find all of your favorite books, DVDs, and video games. You can only conclude that someone expected your arrival and prepared the conditions in the bungalow to meet your needs and satisfy your desires. Scientists have drawn the same conclusion about our universe: it was uniquely designed for us.

I warned you earlier that the evidence for the existence of God is overwhelming. And believe it or not, we're just getting started.

Consider spending time in nature contemplating the order, beauty, and complexity of God's creation. Praise God for the way He's revealed Himself through His creation.

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Day 4

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

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So far this week we've explored both the vastness of the universe and the intricacies of our local planet as evidence of God's existence. As it turns out, we needn't look any farther than the backs of our own hands. The presence of human beings on earth provides convincing evidence for the existence of God. This is often referred to as the anthropological argument because *anthropos* means *man*.

Today we'll consider how human existence and consciousness serve as evidence for the existence of God. More importantly, we'll explore how the nature of humanity points to the truth that we are able not only to know God exists but also to truly *know* Him on a personal level.

When we talk about anthropological evidence for the existence of God, we have to deal with the theory of evolution, the idea that all current forms of life, including human beings, are the result of slow changes or mutations that have occurred over billions of years, beginning with a single-celled organism. Let me make an important distinction from the start. There are many Christians, often referred to as theistic evolutionists, who believe God designed and maintained the evolutionary process.

However, most proponents of evolution believe life both appeared and developed through random chance alone, without the influence of any supernatural Being. I'll refer to these people as Darwinian evolutionists, and it's their views I want to address.

What comes to mind when you hear the word *evolution*? Why?

What do you currently believe is the best explanation for how life appeared and developed on our planet? Why?

## WE'RE HERE

One of the core talking points of Darwinian evolution is that laboratory experiments have indicated chemical substances such as ammonia, methane, and hydrogen can be fused by energy from a bolt of lightning, resulting in the production of amino acids. Atheists use such experiments to make a considerable leap: because the building blocks of life *could have* been developed by random chance, God doesn't exist.

Darwinian evolutionists fail to point out that the mathematical odds are very much against this leap. For example, even if we concede that amino acids could be developed by random chance, what are the chances of those substances achieving the right combinations for life? Not good. Biochemists estimate the probability of a single protein molecule assembling through random chance is 1 in  $10^{160}$ ; that's 10 followed by 160 zeros.

The odds become even more astronomical when you consider several protein molecules must combine to produce a functioning cell. According to noted astronomer and mathematician Sir Frederick Hoyle, the odds of a cell assembling itself by random chance would be 1 in  $10^{40,000}$ . Human beings are a staggering complex network of organs, tissues, nerves, and more—all of which are made up of trillions and trillions of cells.

In other words, the idea that life appeared and evolved by random chance is statistically impossible.

What's your reaction to the previous statistics? Why?

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## WE THINK; THEREFORE, WE ARE

Here's a note of caution: even as we dig into statistics and probabilities about proteins, cells, organs, and other physical structures, we must remember that human beings are more than physical structures. We are more than the sum of our body parts.

Human beings are different from every other form of life on our planet. In fact, one of the first concepts made clear in Scripture is that human beings have been set apart because we were made in the image of God:

God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

**GENESIS 1:26-27**

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What does it mean for human beings to be created in God’s image?

Read the following passages of Scripture and record how they contribute to your understanding of our nature as human beings.

Genesis 2:4-7

Matthew 6:26

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Let’s examine three observable differences between human beings and the rest of the animal kingdom, all of which point to the existence of God.

- 1. Human consciousness.** We are aware of ourselves and capable of rational thought—something that can’t be explained by random evolutionary processes. I like the question asked by cosmologist Allan Sandage: “How is it that inanimate matter can organize itself to contemplate itself?”<sup>2</sup>

**2. Awareness of the supernatural.** Since the beginning of humankind, people in all cultures have demonstrated an innate desire to worship a deity. This innate desire is at the core of C. S. Lewis's famous argument for the existence of God:

Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.<sup>3</sup>

**3. Awareness of moral absolutes.** We have an innate sense of right and wrong that's unique and separate from all other known forms of life—a sense that clearly points to the existence of God as the source of those moral absolutes.

Which of the three previous arguments do you find most convincing as evidence for the existence of God? Why?

What are some additional ways human beings are different or separated from other forms of life on the planet?

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## WE CAN KNOW GOD

Let's take another look at Genesis 1:27: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." This verse shows that God took a personal interest in the creation of human beings. He wasn't a divine watchmaker, setting the universe in motion and then turning His attention to other things. Instead, He was personally involved in our creation (look again at Gen. 2:4-7), and He took a personal interest in the characteristics that make us who we are.

Moreover, God wasn't interested in humanity as a general group. He had a personal knowledge of us as individuals from the very beginning of His creative work:

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Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

**EPHESIANS 1:3-4**

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What emotions do you experience when you read those verses? Why?

How does it affect your life to know that God took specific care in your design?

Why does it matter to know that God specifically designed us? Because it means we don't have to be satisfied with an intellectual knowledge about the overwhelming evidence pointing to the existence of God. We can have more. Indeed, we can actually *know* God!

The Creator of the universe cares about us, He personally created us, and He wants us to know Him. That's the message of the gospel. And that's a truth on which you can base everything that matters.

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Day 5

## EXPERIENTIAL EVIDENCE

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Hundreds of thousands of people around the world claim to have seen unidentified flying objects (UFOs) of various forms in a number of different places. A large percentage of these men and women believe such UFOs to be space vehicles piloted by beings from other planets. A much smaller number of people claim to have made personal contact with alien beings through these UFOs. Have the majority of people in our society been convinced that UFOs are alien spacecraft because so many people claim to have shared experiences? Not exactly. Aliens are good fodder for blockbuster movies and TV shows, but UFO enthusiasts are mostly confined to our cultural fringes. People who believe in alien visitors almost never commit their lives to such beliefs. They rarely make sacrifices for their cause, nor do they put themselves in danger to advance their mission.

As we'll see today, the opposite is true of those who choose to follow Jesus Christ. Countless numbers of Christians have changed the entire focus of their lives because of their experiences with God, even to the point of dying for their beliefs. Taken together, this massive contingent of witnesses makes a convincing statement for the existence of God and His desire to be personally involved with His creation.

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### THE APOSTLES

When we think of the apostles, we sometimes picture them as bumbler. Although they accompanied Jesus during His three years of public ministry, they often missed the point of what Jesus came to do and say. And they certainly made their share of mistakes.

Read the following passages of Scripture and record what they reveal about the apostles before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

Matthew 16:5-12

Mark 8:31-33

Mark 9:33-37

We should remember, however, that the apostles became changed men after Jesus ascended into heaven and after they experienced the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The apostles dedicated their lives to proclaiming the message of the gospel, and their efforts sparked the largest movement ever to shake the foundations of human civilization.

What gave the apostles the courage and confidence for such a radical redirection of their lives? It was their shared experiences with Jesus after He conquered death and rose from the grave. Paul left us this description of those days:

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I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

**1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-7**

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Do you consider the apostles to be reliable witnesses for Jesus' death and resurrection? Why or why not?

In what way does the apostles' success at launching the church provide evidence for the existence of God?

Even with their incredible success in advancing God's kingdom, the most convincing experiential evidence generated by the apostles wasn't the way they lived; it was the way they died. Church tradition reports that of the 12 apostles who led the church after Jesus' ascension into heaven, 11 of them were tortured and killed as martyrs. John, the only apostle to die a natural death, was exiled to the remote island of Patmos because of his refusal to stop proclaiming the gospel.

They weren't the only ones who suffered. Countless members of the early church were tortured and killed because of their faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ:

Others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

**HEBREWS 11:36-38**

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What people do you love enough to die for? Why?

To which movements or ideas, if any, are you committed to the point of death? Why?

Those who deny the existence of God and the divinity of Jesus Christ often make a number of excuses about Jesus' resurrection from the dead. They claim the followers of Jesus so desperately wanted to see their leader again that they imagined they saw Him after His death or that they secretly stole His body from the tomb.

Such theories make no sense in light of the facts. People don't commit their lives to imaginary deities. They certainly don't give up their lives for a cause they know to be a lie. Rather, the actions of the apostles serve as a powerful witness for the existence of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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## **FOLLOWERS TODAY**

Two thousand years after the apostles ignited the spark that became the church, people around the globe are still deeply committed to God's work in the world, even to the point of enduring persecution and death because of their faith in Jesus. In fact, it's estimated that more than 45 million people were martyred for their faith in the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone. That's more than the combined populations of New York, London, Paris, and Shanghai.

What examples have you heard of Christians being persecuted for their faith today?

Of course, being persecuted is not the only mark of a life changed through an encounter with God. The experiential argument for the existence of a Creator encompasses billions of people throughout history—people from every station in life and every nation in the world—who've dedicated their lives to serving God. Such a massive witness should not and cannot be ignored.

What evidence would you offer someone for the existence of God, based on your personal experience of a relationship with Him?

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## THE CHOICE

All of us make choices every day based on the best available evidence rather than on absolute proof. And for most of us, the amount of evidence we require to make a decision is determined by the importance of the decision. So our decision about the existence of God represents the most important choice we'll ever make. And the bottom-line question we need to answer in making such a choice is this: Does the available evidence argue for or against the existence of an eternal Creator—a divine Being we refer to as God?

How would you answer the previous question? Why?

What impact has your answer had on the course of your life?

This week we've reviewed evidence that unflinchingly points toward God's presence in the universe. The structure of that universe, the complexity of its design, the uniqueness of human beings, and the experiences of billions of people throughout history all point to a divine Creator. I hope this evidence will help you move forward with confidence in service to your Creator.

1. Mark Buchanan, *Your God Is Too Safe: Rediscovering the Wonder of a God You Can't Control* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2001), 67.
2. Allan Sandage, quoted in George Johnson, "Science and Religion: Bridging the Great Divide," *The New York Times* [online], 30 June 1998 [cited 4 September 2012]. Available from the Internet: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).
3. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 136.

WEEK 2

**HOW CAN I KNOW  
THE BIBLE IS TRUE?**

## WEEK 2 • GROUP EXPERIENCE

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### START

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WELCOME TO THIS SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION OF *HOW CAN I KNOW?*

Last week's application challenge involved soliciting other people's opinions about the existence of God. What surprised you about those opinions? What did you find interesting?

Describe what you liked best in week 1.  
What questions do you still have?

How are your opinions and experiences about the existence of God connected with your opinions and experiences about the trustworthiness of the Bible?

Read these verses aloud in preparation for viewing the DVD segment.

The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

**HEBREWS 4:12-13**

## WATCH

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COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING VIEWER GUIDE AS YOU WATCH DVD SESSION 2.

### What Do We Mean When We Say the Bible Is True?

1. The Bible is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Bible is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ is God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man.—Charles Ryrie

God \_\_\_\_\_ the entire process of inspiration.

God used the authors' individual \_\_\_\_\_.

God used human authors to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

They composed and recorded God's \_\_\_\_\_.

They composed and recorded without \_\_\_\_\_.

They composed and recorded in the words of the original \_\_\_\_\_.

### Evidence for the Trustworthiness of the Bible

1. The Bible's claims about \_\_\_\_\_
2. Fulfilled \_\_\_\_\_
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible
4. The early \_\_\_\_\_ of the message
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ evidence

### Objections to the Trustworthiness of the Bible

1. Scribes must have made numerous \_\_\_\_\_ in copying texts throughout the centuries.
2. The selection of the books in our Bible was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The Bible contains too many errors and \_\_\_\_\_ to be trustworthy.



## RESPOND

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USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS THE TEACHING FROM THE DVD SEGMENT.

What did you like most about Pastor Jeffress's teaching? Why?

What do we mean when we say the Bible is inerrant?

What do we mean when we say the Bible is inspired?

Review the different types of evidence for the trustworthiness of God's Word. Which type of evidence do you find most convincing?

How do you react to the idea that the Bible contains minor errors and contradictions?

Are you willing to base the course of your life on the trustworthiness of God's Word? Why or why not?

**Application.** Carry a physical copy of the Bible with you as often as possible throughout the coming week. Observe the ways people react. Try to record what people say when they see you carrying God's Word.

**Scripture.** Memorize 2 Timothy 3:16-17 this week.

**Assignment.** Read week 2 and complete the activities before the next group experience.