

# Knowing God Personally

## 1 God's perspective:

**God loves you and created you to know Him personally. He has a wonderful plan for your life.**

God created you. Not only that, he loves you so much that he wants you to spend eternity with him. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus came so that each of us could know and understand God in a personal way. Jesus alone can bring meaning and purpose to life.

Q What keeps us from knowing God? ...

## 2 Our Condition:

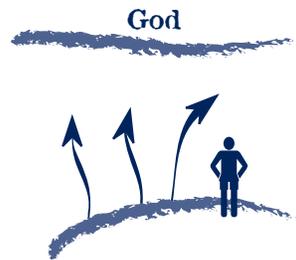
**People are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love and plan.**

The fact is, we need Jesus. The Bible says, "...all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). Though God intended for us to have a relationship with him, we naturally want to do things our own way.

Deep down, our attitude may be one of active rebellion toward God or passive indifference, but it's all evidence of what the Bible calls sin. The Bible tells us that "All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

The result of sin in our lives is death—spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23). Although we may try to reach God through our own effort, we inevitably fail.

This diagram shows the great gap that exists between us and God. The arrows illustrate that we might try to reach God through our own efforts. We may try to do good things, or earn God's acceptance through a good life or a moral philosophy. But our good efforts are insufficient to cover up our sin.



Q How can we bridge this gulf?..

## 3 God's Response:

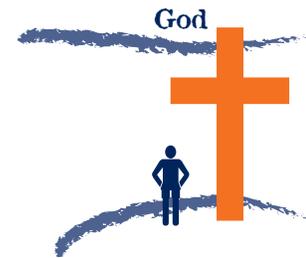
**Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love and plan.**

Jesus Christ is God's solution to the problem of human imperfection and evil. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, we don't have to be separated from God any longer. Jesus paid the price for our sin and in so doing, bridged the gap between us and God. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:8).

Instead of trying harder to reach God, we simply need to accept Jesus and his sacrifice as the one way to God. "I am the way, the truth and the life," Jesus said. "No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He also said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish" (John 11:25-26).

But not only did Jesus die for our sin, he rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

When he did, he proved beyond doubt that he can rightfully promise eternal life—that he is the Son of God and the only means by which we can know God. He said,



"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Yet just having knowledge about God's plans and purposes isn't enough. We need to consciously accept Jesus Christ as the payment for our sin and welcome him into our life.

! It is not enough just to know these three truths....

## 4 Our Response:

**We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; then we can know God personally and experience His love and plan.**

The Bible says, "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

We accept Jesus by faith. The Bible says, "God saved you by his special favour when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

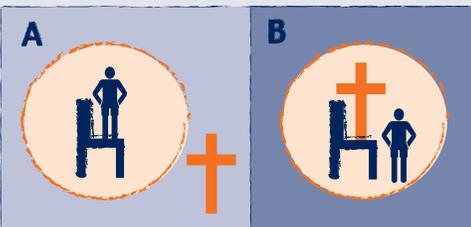
Accepting Jesus means believing that Jesus is the Son of God, who he claimed to be, then inviting him to guide and direct our lives and make us into new people (John 3:1-8).

# onally

Jesus said, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20).

How will you respond to God's invitation? What will you do with the claims of Jesus Christ?

Consider these two circles.



#### A- Self-Directed Life

- Self is on the throne
- Jesus is outside the life
- Interests are directed by self, often resulting in frustration

#### B- Christ-Directed Life

- Jesus is in the life and on the throne
- Self is yielding to Jesus
- Interests are directed by Jesus, resulting in harmony with God

Q Which circle best represents your life?

Q Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

## Begin a relationship with Jesus...

You can receive Christ right now. Remember that Jesus says, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). Would you like to respond to his invitation? Here's how.

The precise words you use to commit yourself to God are not important. He knows the intentions of your heart. If you are unsure of what to pray, this might help you put it into words:

**"Jesus, I want to know you. I want you to come into my life. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin so that I**

**could be fully accepted by you. Only you can give me the power to change and become the person you created me to be. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life with God. I give my life to you. Please do with it as you wish. Amen."**

If you sincerely asked Jesus into your life just now, then he has come into your life as he promised. You have begun a personal relationship with God.

What follows is a lifelong journey of change and growth as you get to know God better through Bible reading, prayer and interaction with other Christians...

## How to Know That Christ is in Your Life.

### Did you receive Christ into your life?

According to His promise as recorded in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said that He would come into your life and be your Saviour and friend so you can know Him personally. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.)

The Bible Promises Eternal Life to All Who Receive Christ

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. HE who has the Son has life; he woul does not have the son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Sone of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (I John 5:11-13)

## NOTES

1. This argument is from numerous writings of W.L. Craig, e.g. *The Existence of God* and *The Beginning of the Universe*, (HLP, 1979)
2. J.Y.T. Greid, ed., *The Letters of David Hume*, V. I., (Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 187.
3. Kai Nielson, *Reason and Practice*, p. 48.
4. Quentin Smith, "The Uncaused Beginning of the Universe," in *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*, by William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 120.
5. David Hilbert, "On the Infinite", in *Philosophy of Mathematics*, ed. with an Intro. by Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (Prentice-Hall, 1964) p. 151.
6. David Hume, *Enquiry*. xii. II 125.
7. Stephen Hawking, "Austin American-Statesman", October 19, 1997.
8. Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics*, (Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 189.
9. Robert Jastrow, *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*, ed. Roy Varghese, (Regnery Gateway, 1984), p. 22.
10. The Canadian Undergraduate Survey, 1988 Marketing Task Force, Box 300, Vancouver, BC.
11. Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*, (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 130.



The author, Michael Horner, has an MA in Philosophy from the University of Toronto.

As an itinerant philosopher with Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada, he has participated in over 60 debates and delivered thousands of lectures on University campuses around the world. Mr. Horner is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the Evangelical Philosophical Society, and is an adjunct instructor in Philosophy at Trinity Western University.

# Does God exist?

“You can't prove God exists and you can't prove God doesn't exist.” This is the response one often hears when the question of God's existence is raised.

It may be true in one trivial sense, but quite misleading in another critical sense. If we are using “prove” in the strict sense of absolute certainty, it may be true that we can't prove or disprove God's existence. But this does not mean that there is no good evidence or arguments for God, which might make belief in God's existence very reasonable. We know very little (if anything) with absolute mathematical certainty, so certainty is neither a reasonable or necessary standard. Like virtually all of our other knowledge, I think we can show that it is highly probable that God exists. The premises of the argument need not be certain, merely more plausible than their denials. It follows that merely having a possible alternative explanation does not defeat a probabilistic theistic argument. What one needs is a more probable alternative explanation.

There is no shortage of good arguments for God's existence. Alvin Plantinga, arguably one of the world's more brilliant philosophers, recently delivered a paper outlining two-dozen or so theistic arguments. Space will limit me to two.

## 1 God is the best explanation for the beginning of the universe

### Premise 1.

Whatever begins to exist must have a cause.

### Premise 2.

The Universe began to exist.

### Conclusion:

Therefore, the Universe has a cause.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever begins to exist must have a cause. Most of us have no problem accepting this principle. We assume its truth in virtually every aspect in our daily lives. Our experience always confirms it and never denies it. But surprisingly philosophers have been unable to prove its veracity.

Nevertheless, it has always been a fundamental first principle of philosophy and science that “*from nothing, nothing comes*”, “*being cannot come from non-being*”. Even the great sceptic David Hume, who argued that we could not prove the causal principle through ordinary means, still believed it to be true and thought a denial of it was absurd, “I never asserted so absurd a proposition that anything might arise without a cause.”<sup>2</sup>

Surely it is more reasonable to hold to this premise than to believe that things pop into existence out of nothing and by nothing. Can we reasonably disagree with the atheist Kai Neilson when he writes, “Suppose you suddenly hear a loud bang and you ask me, ‘What made that bang?’ and I reply ‘Nothing, it just happened.’ You would not accept that – in fact you would find my reply quite unintelligible.”<sup>3</sup>

## Scientific Confirmation

Regarding premise number two, we have both scientific confirmation and logical argument for the Universe having a beginning. According to the standard Big Bang expansion model, space, time, matter and energy all came into existence simultaneously around 12-15 Billion years ago. The beginning point is often called a singularity, the boundary of space and time, or a mathematical point, where our expanding universe was shrunk down to nothing at all. Significantly, it was not the result of prior natural, physical processes. The atheist philosopher, Quentin Smith, acknowledges, "It belongs analytically to the concept of the cosmological singularity that it is not the effect of prior physical events. The definition of a singularity ...entails that it is impossible to extend the spacetime manifold beyond the singularity. ...This rules out the idea that the singularity is an effect of some prior natural process."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, given enough time, the universe will eventually reach a state of equilibrium, a cold, dark, dead, virtually motionless universe. Clearly, if the universe is beginningless, then there has been an infinite length of time preceding this present moment. But obviously, there is still plenty of heat, light and movement left in the universe. Thus the past must be finite. The universe had a beginning.

## Infinite Past Impossible

The third and strongest piece of support for the beginning of the universe comes from the impossibility of an infinite past. This is because an actual infinite number of anything cannot exist in the real world. But to have a universe with no beginning you would have to have an actual infinite number of past events. We might think that since we do use the concept of infinity in mathematics there would be no problem here.

But mathematicians who work with the concept of actual infinity, do so by adopting some arbitrary rules, like "the whole is not always greater than the part", and "subtraction and division are not allowed", to avoid the absurdities and contradictions that come with an infinite actual number of anything. And these rules don't apply to the real world. Actual infinity only works in the abstract realm, and only with some special rules.

As David Hilbert, one of this century's greatest mathematicians has written, "The infinite is nowhere to be found in reality. It neither exists in nature nor provides a legitimate basis for rational thought. The role that remains for the infinite... is solely that of an idea..."<sup>5</sup>

## An Absurd Library

To see the absurdity and contradictions of an actual infinite number of things in the real world imagine or hypothesize your campus library having an infinite number of black books and an infinite number of green books, alternating colours on the shelves and numbered consecutively on the spines.

Does it make any sense to say that there are as many black books as there are black plus green books together? But that is what you would have to say if you want to claim an actual infinite is possible in the real world.

Suppose you withdrew all the green books. How many books are there left in the library? There would still be an actual infinite number of books in the library even though we just withdrew an infinite number and found a way to get them home! Suppose you withdrew the books numbered 4,5,6... and so on. Now how many books are left? THREE! Something surely is wrong here! One time we subtract an infinite number of books and we're left with an infinite number; the next time we subtract an infinite number and we're left with three – a clear logical contradiction. Since our hypothesis leads to a contradiction, the hypothesis must be false – a library with an actual infinite number of books *cannot exist*.

While we can avoid these contradictions in the mathematical realm by making up rules like you can't subtract or divide when using infinity, we cannot in the real world prevent people from taking books out of libraries.

Therefore, since a beginningless past would be an actual infinite number of things (events) and since an actual infinite number of things cannot exist in the real world, it follows logically that the past is not infinite. The universe had a beginning.

Furthermore, an infinite past is impossible because adding one member after another cannot form an actual infinite. It's like



counting to infinity – you just never get there. Just like we can never *finish* counting to infinity, we can never *begin* to count down from a negative infinity. There is no first term. As the great sceptical philosopher David Hume admitted, “An infinite number of real parts of time passing in succession... appears so evident a contradiction that no man whose judgement is not corrupted... would ever be able to admit of it.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus the Big Bang Theory, the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the impossibility of an infinite past all support the universe having a beginning.

Since whatever begins to exist must have a cause, it follows logically that the universe has a cause. And since it cannot be the result of some prior natural process, the cause of the universe must be beyond nature.

## Most Common Objection

### “What caused God?”

The question “What caused X?” only makes sense if there was some indication that “X” had a beginning. There is nothing that indicates that the cause of the Big Bang had a beginning. In fact since time did not exist beyond the Big Bang, the cause of the Big Bang must have existed timelessly. Thus it could have no beginning, and hence no cause. We may want to say this about the universe, but we can't, since as we have seen, the evidence is the universe had a beginning.

“the cosmological singularity ...is not the effect of prior physical events.”



Astrophysicists have been discovering that the Big Bang appears to have been incredibly fine-tuned. Stephen Hawking describes the situation,

“...the universe and the laws of physics seem to have been specifically designed for us. If any one of about 40 physical qualities had more than slightly different values, life as we know it could not exist: Either atoms would not be stable, or they wouldn't combine into molecules, or the stars wouldn't form the heavier elements, or the universe would collapse before life could develop, and so on...”<sup>7</sup>

The numerical values of the different natural forces like gravity, electromagnetism, subatomic forces, charges of electrons, etc. “just happened” to fall into an extremely narrow range that is conducive for life to exist. Minute changes in any one of these forces would have destroyed the possibility for life and in most cases destroyed the universe itself.

Consider these **examples** from among dozens:

**1. The Proton/Electron Mass Ratio is 1836 to 1.**

Had it been slightly different, there would be no chemistry.

**2. Yet the electrical charge of the proton and the electron are exactly equal numerically.**

Had they been fractionally different, hydrogen atoms would repel one another, and there would be no galaxies.

**3. If the strong force (the force that binds protons and neutrons in the nucleus) was just**

- **2% less**, it would have destroyed all nuclei essential to life
- **2% more**, it would have prevented the formation of protons and therefore matter



“God has given us evidence sufficiently clear  
to convince those with an open heart and mind...”

Blaise Pascal

# Best explanation for a Universe that supports

#### 4. If the expansion rate of the universe was

- less by one part in a million million, the universe would have collapsed very early
- greater by one part in a million, galaxies, stars and planets would never have formed.

### Chance or Design

If the Big Bang was merely a chance happening it is virtually impossible that the values of all of these 40-50 forces would have been exactly right to ensure the survival of the universe and to allow life. Given the potentially infinite number of other values these forces could have taken, it is much more likely that they would have fallen outside the very narrow range that is conducive to life. As John Leslie, the philosopher of science has put it, “Life prohibiting universes are much more probable than life permitting universes.” This is evidence of an intelligent designer behind the Big Bang who ensured that it happened in such a way that the universe could support life.

No wonder scientists like Dr. Paul Davies, internationally known author and professor of Theoretical Physics, has said this finding represents “the most compelling evidence for an element of cosmic design.”;<sup>8</sup> and Dr. Robert Jastrow, Founder of NASA's Institute of Space Studies, has called this “the most theistic result ever to come out of science.”<sup>9</sup>

### Most Common Objection

“It is not surprising that we observe the initial conditions of the universe to be conducive to life because those are obviously the only conditions that could precede our existence.”

This is only the case if one assumes beforehand that our existence itself is not surprising. But our argument is that, given the potentially infinite number of non-life values the forces could have taken, it is extremely surprising that the entire scenario has taken place, i.e., the right initial conditions and the existence of observers. If one assumes that the second part is not surprising, then of course it follows that the first part is also not surprising. But that clearly begs the question.

### Summary and Conclusion

Just like two cords wound together become a strong rope, so too the cumulative effect of these two arguments provide us with a powerful case for the existence of God.

Taken together these two arguments tell us that the cause and designer of the universe is an intelligent, immaterial, powerful, changeless being that existed in a timeless, eternal state beyond the beginning of the universe. This, I suggest, is close enough to the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of God that we can justifiably conclude that indeed, God does exist.

### Seeking God

A recent survey of university students indicated that 49.4% of the students polled claimed to think about the existence of God very or quite often. Furthermore 71.3 % said that they would want to have a personal relationship with God, if they could.<sup>10</sup> Many students are seeking God.

However, some people have told me that even if all their objections about God's existence were answered to their satisfaction they still would not seek God. This shows, I believe, that in many cases the arguments may not be the real issue. The issue is that some of us have decided beforehand that we want to be autonomous, independent, masters of our own destiny, and this is what stops us from accepting the clear evidence that is all around us for God's existence.

I agree with Blaise Pascal the French philosopher and mathematician when he wrote, “ God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind. Yet evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed.”

Our attitude influences what we see. Of even greater importance than arguments for God's existence is whether we are open to the possibility of a personal love relationship with God.

Consider the atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel's comments,

“*I want atheism to be true* and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that *I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God ; I don't want a universe like that.*” (emphasis added)<sup>11</sup>

To accurately answer this crucial question “Does God Exist?”, we need to ensure that our hearts and minds are open, not closed.

God tells us that, “You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.” Jer 29:13

© Campus Crusade for Christ of Canada, Inc.  
Revised October 2003 ANS2DO  
ISBN 1-894605-02-0