

CONNECTING TO GOD THROUGH THE TRUTH

For the believer in Jesus Christ, connecting to God should be a way of life. J.D. Greear in his little book *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart*, says, “Salvation is a posture of repentance and faith that you begin in a moment and maintain for the rest of your life.”¹ I really appreciate that wording because it recognizes that salvation comes to a person at a time of decision and then continues throughout life. The implication is ongoing growth and being connected to or abiding in God and His Word.

This is another devotional guide about connecting. Over the past four plus years we have been doing a lot of connecting to God. I hope this guide and the upcoming messages will help you daily be connected and become more connected to Him for the rest of your life.

Jesus said to His Father in the prayer in **John 17:17**, “*Sanctify them by Your Truth. Your Word is Truth.*” We are going to be focusing on connecting to God through the truth. The truth is His truth. Truth is a person and His name is Jesus.

It is always good to begin a project like this with the end in mind. Here it is and enjoy!

- TRUTH IS A PERSON AND THAT PERSON IS JESUS CHRIST
- TRUTH IS THAT WHICH CORRESPONDS TO REALITY
- BELIEVERS MUST BE PREPARED TO GIVE REASONS FOR THEIR FAITH
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THERE IS SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THERE IS DESIGN IN CREATION
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THERE IS RIGHT AND WRONG
- REASON TO BELIEVE: GOD CONFIRMED HIS MESSAGE WITH MIRACLES
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THE NEW TESTAMENT IS 99.5% TEXTUALLY PURE
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THE NEW TESTAMENT PRESENTS JESUS AS GOD
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS TOLD THE TRUTH
- REASON TO BELIEVE: JESUS REALLY DID RISE FROM THE DEAD
- REASON TO BELIEVE: JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD
- REASON TO BELIEVE: JESUS TAUGHT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

¹Greear, J.D.. *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* (Kindle Locations 190-191). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 1 WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

“What is truth?” Jesus was asked this question by a Roman governor named Pilate. Pilate was questioning Jesus to decide whether or not He was guilty to be punished. Pilate went on to say, “I find no fault in Him.” At least he was right about that. This same question, “What is truth?”, is still being asked today. It’s a question you will hear often and probably think a lot about. That question is what we will be dealing with for the next thirteen weeks.

All of this is based on scripture and one verse in particular:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. 1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV)

The word “defense” in the Greek is the word “apologia.” It is the word we get the word ‘apologetics’ from. Apologetics is the study of how we can give an answer for what we believe and why we believe it. We are going to be looking at how to give an answer, defense, or apologetic. More clearly the goal is that believers in Jesus will be able to give reasons why they believe. It is very important that believers know what they believe and be prepared to tell others what they believe and why they believe it.

DAY 1 A PERSONAL JOURNEY OF VERIFICATION

Read 2 Timothy 1:12

I grew up in a Christian home and was regularly taken to church and all the associated activities. I was saved at about the age of ten. I have always believed and never doubted, but to say that I have always believed 100% would not be correct. There are things I do not completely understand, yet because I have enough information to understand, I do believe in them. For example, I drive over bridges almost every day in my car. I do not fully understand how those bridges were built, but I have enough information to believe and act on my belief. The same is true for God. I have enough information regarding God, the Bible, Jesus, and other major biblical teachings to have a strong belief. Although not always 100%, I am continuously growing in my faith. True, biblical faith is built upon information; the more reliable the information, the stronger my belief. Clark Pinnock says, “The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects as false.” This is faith that is informed. We do not make a leap of faith. We do however “leap into the direction set by the light.”²

Most of us struggle with doubt and belief – that’s normal. It’s important to look at what you believe from different directions. These devotions are designed to help you do just that. If what we believe about God and the bible is true, then we should be able to look around and see these truths in the world around us.

That is what this devotional book is all about. It is about this—TRUTH.

Ask: What is one thing you’d like to ask God to help you understand Him a little better?

Pray: Ask God to help you and your family make time for these devotions; that you could help remind each other and be as consistent as possible.

DAY 2 EVERYONE HAS A WORLDVIEW

Read John 14:6

It is true—everyone has a worldview. A person’s worldview is the way he sees and understands the world, especially regarding issues such as politics, philosophy, and religion.³ A worldview is very important and leads us to make certain choices every day. All people have a worldview. Unfortunately, many people don’t take the time to choose their worldview carefully – they believe what everyone else says or what they hear and see on TV.

When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” He became our worldview. In church, we know the correct answer is usually Jesus (even when we don’t hear the question sometimes)! For the Christian, Jesus truly is the answer to all of life’s questions – but it’s important that we study, use reason, logic, science, philosophy and of course the Bible to build a strong Christian worldview. When we place our faith in Jesus and learn from God’s Word, we can begin to understand important truths – such as where the universe came from, why we exist, and how we should live. As we grow a stronger Christian worldview, we will be able to tell others about our beliefs and why we believe.

Ask: Jesus is our everything, what is one thing He could help you with today?

Pray: Pray that God will help you to give answers for the reason for what you believe.

² True Truth: Defending Absolute Truth in a Relativistic World, Art Lindsley, Kindle location 78

³ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/world-view>

DAY 3 WHAT IS TRUTH?

Read John 18:33-38

This is quite a question! In our world many people think it's impossible to know the truth. Some say that truth is whatever you want it to be or that "it's true for you but not for me." Many would say, "There is no such thing as truth." Well, you have to ask yourself - is that true?

But what about Pilate? Did he know something about Jesus? Did God reveal something to Him? Unfortunately, Pilate didn't take the time to listen to Jesus. When Pilate asked that question he did not wait for Jesus to respond. He declared, "I find no fault in Him." Pilate was so caught up in his world that he didn't realize that Jesus was THE TRUTH he was looking for.

God is sovereign. He does not change. What He says is the same—and does not change. So it is safe to say that truth is a person. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and life.*" God is truth in its fullness—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To know Jesus, to grow in Him is to know truth and grow in truth.

When you read the Bible - the Word of God - you are reading truth. That which is contrary to the Word of God is not true. That is the reason for the struggle that believers face today. When we live by the truth, we will often be in conflict with a world that believes there is no truth.

One of our founding fathers, Alexander Hamilton said, "If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything." That is one of the major reasons for this study!

Ask: Can you think of a time when telling the truth helped you?

Pray: Thank God for the truth. Pray that God will help you spend more time in His word learning the truth.

DAY 4 WHY DOES TRUTH MATTER?

Read John 8:30-36

Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, "*You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*" Obviously truth is very important. It was once believed that the earth was flat. That put people in bondage. They weren't free to travel on the oceans because they believed that you could sail right off the end of the earth. That was not freedom. People became free to travel when they learned the truth – that the earth is round.

Truth is a person with clear truth directions for how to live. Knowing and following Jesus will help us live lives that are free from fear and confusion.

One of the farthest places in the continental United States from Fayetteville is Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. It is separated from the United States by Canada, but it's still possible to drive there. It would take about seven days of driving twelve hours a day to cover the 4,709 miles! Freedom comes from the use of a GPS or a map. That way you know where you are, where you are going, and how to get there. Following the GPS or the map would free you up to travel confidently that you will arrive at your planned destination.

Earlier this week we said that a strong Christian worldview would help us understand big questions. If we use God's word like a GPS for life, we can begin to understand:

- Where did we come from?
- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- How should we live?
- Where are we going?

God is truth. His Word is truth that we can read and follow. Jesus was Truth in a body like ours. The Holy Spirit lives in us and leads us into truth. With the Word of God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God we can truly know and follow the Truth...and be free!

Ask: What's the longest trip you've ever been on? How did you know how to get there?

Pray: Thank God for giving us Jesus so that we could always know the Truth – He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

DAY 5 MANY ARE SUPPRESSING THE TRUTH

Read Romans 1:18-25

Can truth really be known? In Romans 1, Paul says that God can be known because He has chosen to reveal Himself to us in His creation. Many try to suppress, or "hold down," the truth about God, but this is impossible. Just by looking around and seeing all that has been created, people know deep-down that a Creator was responsible. Even still, many people ignore the truth and try to hide from God.

The Bible opens with ten words, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* Now either that is true or it is not. Believe it or not, many people believe that the universe came into existence by chance, instead of being created by God. Even most scientists today are now convinced that the universe had a beginning. They no longer believe that it came into existence by a slow process of evolution. In fact, it is clear that most species of animal and plant life came on the scene suddenly. However, for decades evolution has been taught in public schools as a scientific fact. Even today when it is scientifically accepted that evolution has major flaws, most people are still hesitant to accept a Creator.

The main thing to keep in mind today is that the Biblical account of creation is rejected by many. Why? Because some people continue to suppress the truth and promote ungodly lifestyles that come from it.

No wonder our nation is in a moral crisis! May God’s people return to Him with great zeal, giving an informed reason for why they believe what they believe.

Pray: Thank God for this time of study in apologetics. Ask Him to give you more understanding and wisdom so that you can help others know the truth.

WEEK 2 WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

As believers we have been told by Jesus to go into the whole world and tell people the Good News. This include making disciples, baptizing and teaching. A huge part of this calling that we often leave out is teaching people how to give an answer for the reason we have the hope that we do. This is called apologetics. Many people are scared of this word but it comes from 1 Peter 3:15 and it means “to give a defense.” This week we will look at what apologetics is and what it is about. Every day apologetics become more important in our world because people are not growing up learning about Christ and haven’t been exposed to the teachings of the Bible.

DAY 1 DEFINING APOLOGETICS

Read 1 Peter 3:14-17

The apologetic verse is 1 Peter 3:15:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. 1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV)

This can be a hard verse to understand, so let’s look at some of the words and phrases a little more closely.

- Sanctify means to set apart, so the first phrase, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” could say Set apart the Lord—keep Him, His Word and His will first in your mind and heart.
- “always be ready to give a defense”—an argument but not in an arguing manner. This kind of arguing isn’t what you would do with your brother or sister, this is speaking the truth in love, as Ephesians 4:15 talks about. When we defend something, we present the facts...still without arguing!
- “a reason for the hope”—reason means logic and hope is why we have confidence in what we believe.

We want people to know and understand why we have hope in Jesus. What makes inviting Him into our hearts so important that we will give up everything else? We know that an eternity in Heaven with Him awaits us, but others may find this difficult to comprehend. We want to do our best to present the truth of Jesus without getting angry or calling people names. Apologetics is how we do this. The challenge is to anticipate questions and then present your answer with kindness and respect. We are going to be working on this moving forward.

Pray: Ask God to help open your mind to learning about the ways to defend your faith. Pray that He will give you opportunities to practice defending your belief in Him.

DAY 2 THE WHY OF APOLOGETICS

Read 1 John 2:24-29

It is God’s will that people be saved and have fellowship with Him and other believers. That’s what the book of 1 John is all about, having fellowship with God and others. There is something else that John talks about in this book, a problem that believers face, even early believers. The problem was those people who were trying to lead others away from the truth of God. John says that one reason for his writing was to warn the people of “those who try to deceive you.” The KJV uses the term “seduce” instead of “deceive.” Seduce means “to lead astray, to lead from the truth.” This is exactly what people try to do...to lead you away from the truth.

People today are still trying to lead us away from the truth of God. In schools, magazines, on the news, in movies, and on tv, we can see lies all around us. The goal of these sources seems to be to attack at the very root of Biblical faith and Christianity. Pay close attention to the things you are learning. Listen out for attacks on the truth and begin to practice how you can give an answer for what you believe.

Pray: Ask God to help guard your heart and mind against those who are trying to lead you from the truth.

DAY 3 CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

Read Jude 3-4

Jude was writing to believers to encourage them in the faith and urge them to “contend earnestly for the faith.” The problem that led to the warning was apostasy. (Apostasy means to turn or fall away.) There were people among the believers who had turned away from the truth and were seeking to turn others away. They were sneaky! They tried to slip in, hang out with the believers, and then lead them away.

With people trying to lead believers away from the truth, it is important to be reminded of what truth is.

Truth is that which corresponds to reality.

There are many other truths about truth. Here are some of them:

- Truth is discovered, not invented. It exists independent of anyone's knowledge of it. (Gravity existed prior to Newton.)
- Truth is transcultural; if something is true, it is true for all people, in all places, at all times (2+2=4 for everyone, everywhere, at every time).
- Truth is unchanging even though our beliefs about truth change. (When we began to believe the earth was round instead of flat, the truth about the earth didn't change, only our belief about the earth changed.)
- Beliefs cannot change a fact, no matter how sincerely they are held. (Someone can sincerely believe the world is flat, but that only makes that person sincerely mistaken.)
- Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it. (An arrogant person does not make the truth he professes false. A humble person does not make the error he professes true.)
- All truths are absolute truths. Even truths that appear to be relative are really absolute. (For example, "I, Frank Turek, feel warm on November 20, 2003" may appear to be a relative truth, but it is actually absolutely true for everyone, everywhere that Frank Turek had the sensation of warmth on that day.)

In short, contrary beliefs are possible, but contrary truths are not possible. We can believe everything is true, but we cannot make everything true.⁴

Pray: Ask God to help you see what is true.

DAY 4 WHEN WAS CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS FIRST PRACTICED?

Read Luke 24:25-32

This biblical account was the occasion of Jesus meeting up with two of His followers who didn't recognize Him. They were traveling to Emmaus. The two are talking about what had taken place in Jerusalem with the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus joins in the conversation with the them. This is when we can see Christian apologetics being practiced by Jesus! He was proving things about the crucifixion with Old Testament prophecy.

²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:27 (NKJV)

Then, with power that can only come from God along with convincing evidence from prophecy, the two men's eyes were opened and they knew it was Jesus.

Jesus used at least one other tool to convince people that He was who He said He was...miracles!

¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. John 14:10-11 (NKJV)

If Jesus used apologetics to defend who He was, it must be an important tool for us to use as well.

Pray: Ask God to show you the importance of apologetics.

DAY 5 SHAPED BY THE TRUTH NOT SHAPING TRUTH

Read Romans 12:1-2

When it comes to truth, we have 2 choices. The first choice is to know that truth is that which corresponds to reality. The truth is the truth! We can't change it, it is what it is. The second choice is much more dangerous. The second choice is trying to make "truth" fit into our world the way we want it to be.

The first choice acknowledges that there is an ultimate reality that we can respond to. With this choice, we find God's grace at work, matching our desires to the truth. The truth is solid, never changing. We can find our place in this truth and conform ourselves to God who created it. Paul wants us to "not be conformed to this world." He warns us about the desire to make our own truth and to shape the world by our desires. This is what happens with the second choice.

The second choice is to change reality to what we want. There are many people and places in the world around us who make the second choice. The second choice makes human desires more important than God's truth. Behaviors can be rationalized in order to do whatever we want. God did not call us to try and shape truth.

Our desires are to be shaped by God's truth and reality. He shaped His creation through truth-His world and His reality. Man's attempt to shape the world with his version of truth will fail miserably.

Pray: God, help me see the value in His reality. Pray that you always see how important it is to make the first choice!

⁴Geisler, Norman L., I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (pp. 37-38). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 3 WHY IS THERE SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING?

It's not hard to look around and see that things are real. We know things exist because we can touch and feel them. We know we exist because we can hear, see, think and reason. When we look up and see the stars we know that there is a giant universe beyond our planet. Of course, the Bible teaches us that everything was created by God, even the heavens. This week we will be looking at the cosmological argument for existence. Remember this is not an argument in the sense of two people arguing. This type of argument is a statement or evidence - as in a court case. Cosmos is the word for universe. The cosmological argument for the existence of God is based on the existence of the universe. So dig in and learn how to give an answer for the reason for the hope that is in you.

DAY 1 WHAT IF THERE WERE NO GOD?

Read Ecclesiastes 2:11 and 12:11-14

Our purpose in this study is to help you understand the evidence for Christian beliefs. However, there are many people who don't even believe that God exists. Sometimes these atheists make statements that can really make you wonder why they don't believe in God. Many unbelieving philosophers admit that if God doesn't exist then life is meaningless...and they still don't believe in God!

It's not hard to figure out that life has meaning. Just think of some of your favorite things. Maybe you love the beach in the summer or the crisp air in the fall. Who can resist a playful puppy or a fresh batch of chocolate chip cookies? Then there are many things that are much more meaningful. The love we feel for those who know us and love us. The laughter and joy that comes from spending time with our friends and family. If there is no God, as some say, then life is absurd and meaningless, but since there is a God life has meaning, value, and purpose.

What about you? Are you convinced that life has meaning, value and purpose? It's clear that without God life is absurd, but with God life is FULL of meaning. God sent His son, Jesus, so that we could have a full, abundant life here on earth. God has also provided a plan for man to live eternally with Him and a plan for a new heaven and new earth. You can trust that God has a wonderful plan for your life – full of meaning, value and purpose!

Ask: What are some of your favorite things? Why do these mean so much to you?

Pray: Thank God for giving our lives meaning, value, and purpose. Ask God to help you understand a bit more of His wonderful plans for your future.

DAY 2 WHAT IS THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD?

Read Genesis 1:1-5

The first ten words of our English Bible give us a powerful truth that sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* Right at the beginning, the Bible provides a truth about God and the universe that determines all that follows. Our God spoke and called into being time, space, and matter. That means that God, the theistic (or One True) God of the Bible, is BIGGER than time, space, and matter.

The word ‘cosmos’ means world or universe. The cosmological argument for God is the argument based on evidence from the existence of the universe. A big part of presenting arguments for Christianity is logic. Logic means putting your thoughts in order – some call it “common sense.” The logic of the cosmological argument goes like this:

1. Everything that had a beginning had a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore the universe had a cause.⁵

It looks like Paul made an appeal to this logic when he wrote about those who, “Suppress the truth.”

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.
Romans 1:20 (NKJV)

Paul was saying that the logic of the creation was enough evidence, so that people who do not believe in God as creator are “without excuse.”

It’s pretty simple, really. Since there is a universe, then there must be a cause. This truth, along with two other arguments, help us see that the God of the Bible is the One who created the universe.

Ask: What is something that used to be hard for you to do, but now you do it without even trying? (Some things are simpler than we think.)

Pray: Thank God for creating the heavens and the earth and for showing us how great and mighty He is through creation.

DAY 3 THE HEAVENS DECLARE GOD’S GLORY

Read Psalm 19:1-6

The Psalmist says that the universe declares God’s glory. The Apostle Paul says that people have no excuse for not believing in God because God reveals Himself through creation for all to see. This is called general revelation. God reveals Himself to us in two ways - general and special revelation. General revelation is what we know about God through His creation - the universe. We can know God exists because we can see what He has made. Special revelation comes to us through His Word, Jesus and miracles. This is special because He is communicating specific parts of His nature to us

The Psalmist says that creation *“declares His glory.”* His glory is His shining, His brightness and splendor. God has revealed certain things about Himself through His creations:

God has shown us in His creation:

He is beyond time—timeless

He is beyond matter—immaterial

He is beyond space—space less

He is Personal—He chose to create

He is Intelligent—everything in creation has design

He is powerful—In order to create from nothing He had to be powerful

When you add it all together, it becomes clear that a powerful Being – full of love and intelligence – created the universe in which we live. The Bible tells us that God spoke and created the universe. God is showing us how good He is when we look at His creation. Just look around and you do not have to look far. God has revealed Himself by His handiwork!

Ask: What are some of your favorite parts of God’s creation?

Pray: Thank God for creating such a wonderful world for us to live in. Ask Him to help you reflect His glory to those around you.

⁵ Geisler, Norman L., I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p.75).

DAY 4 GOD IS ETERNAL, THE UNIVERSE IS NOT

Read Deuteronomy 33:27

Most scientists now agree that the universe had a beginning and it will have an end. We have been looking at the wonders of God's universe and how it reveals His existence. God spoke the universe into beginning and one day He will allow it to end – but, God Himself will never end.

One question you may have then is, “who made God?” Where did God come from? The universe came to exist and everything in the universe came to exist. God on the other hand did not come to exist. The Bible teaches that God is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. He has always been and will always be. He told Moses that His name is “I AM” – which in Hebrew is the verb “to be.” That is because He is the One True God who has always been and will always be.

When Moses blessed the tribes of Israel in Deuteronomy 33, in one verse of his conclusion, he called God eternal. God is, He is not caused.

Sometimes it can be hard to understand how God has always existed – but then again, if He was created then could He really be God? Our God is beyond time, space, and matter. He truly is eternal – and those who believe in His Son, Jesus, will spend all of eternity enjoying Him. Give praise to our Eternal God!

Ask: Can you think of anything else besides God that doesn't have a beginning or end? (Have fun with this)

Pray: Praise God for who He is – the one true God. Give thanks that He allows us to be His children and that we will be with Him forever.

DAY 5 SCIENCE POINTS TO TRUTH

Read John 1:1-5 and Psalm 53:1

When we observe the world around us we can gather all sorts of information. We can even learn to predict certain things and come up with rules based on what we observe. Most of us have a great curiosity about why things work the way they do. It's fun to investigate and even come up with our own scientific experiments. Some people go a step further and become actual scientists. Scientists do a great job observing, categorizing, and even predicting what is happening in our universe. But, a scientist who doesn't believe in God has a really hard time explaining all that he sees and observes.

A scientist who doesn't believe in God can get really frustrated as they try to explain the existence of the universe. That's because all of creation points to there being a Creator. There is just no way around it. Also, as science progresses and further discoveries are made, these discoveries point more and more to the truth of the Bible. Truth is that which corresponds to reality. No matter how smart some people claim to be, none of us are smarter than God. His truth revealed through the Bible is the final word. Any discovery or prediction that goes against God's word simply can't be true.

Remember, the truth will set you free! God's children should enjoy learning, discovering, and investigating all that He has created – after all, if He's the One who created it. He can help you understand some of the wonderful mysteries behind His original ideas!

Ask: What is one mystery about this world that you'd like to ask God to explain to you?

Pray: Thank God for His Word – the truth. Thank Him for His perfect knowledge of all things and for His goodness in helping us understand some of the wonderful mysteries of His creation.

WEEK 4 IS THERE EVIDENCE OF DESIGN IN THE UNIVERSE?

The universe came into existence at a point in the past in an event called the “big bang.” This name came from what scientists believe was the sudden appearance of all of the universe. For believers, it is called the “big bang” because God spoke and it came into existence.

This week we are going to look at another argument or answer for believers to give for why they believe and where their hope comes from. This argument is called the “Teleological Argument.” Teleological comes from a Greek word “telos”, which means design.

The Teleological Argument goes like this:

1. Every design had a designer.
2. The universe has a highly complex design.
3. Therefore, the universe had a Designer.⁶

DAY 1 IS THE UNIVERSE DESIGNED?

Read Psalm 8:1-4

William Paley in the 18th century expressed the claim that every watch has a watchmaker. Think of it this way. Let’s say you were on a hike in the woods far away from the city. You were enjoying nature and suddenly there on the ground is a fancy watch with diamonds that would have been very expensive to buy, and it’s still ticking! If you had been thinking naturalistically, you may wonder what happened in nature to form this watch. Was it a rainstorm with lots of wind? Was there a lightning strike that made it start working? Of course, this would be a silly way to think about it because you would really know that someone lost that watch and it had been made by a watchmaker. But why not look at nature and think about the miraculous event that brought it into existence?

Every day we see cars, jets, and buildings. Someone designed and built those things. What about art? You look at a painting and realize that work of art was created twice. It was first in the mind of the artist and then it was put on canvas. This is the way it is with all things that people produce. Mercedes-Benz stadium where the Falcons play is an incredible work of architecture and design. It first existed in the mind of the designer and then builders made it become a reality. What about something even bigger?

⁶ Geisler, Norman., I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 95). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Our universe was created twice. It first existed in the mind of God, and then He spoke it into existence. He had a plan, intent, and design. It was all done with purpose. When a song writer writes a song, he intends for it to be sung and performed. God's universe is for His intent and purposes.

Pray that God will make it clear to you when you see all of the amazing things around you, that He has a plan and purpose for it all...even you!

DAY 2 FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Read Psalm 139:13-17

Life is an incredible design and plan of God. In 1953 James Watson and Francis Crick discovered DNA. This is the abbreviation for deoxyribonucleic acid. DNA is the chemical that gives instructions for building and replicating all living things. DNA identifies the cells in your body as your cells. Your DNA is what makes you uniquely you. No one else has your DNA. If you were to line all of the DNA found in every cell of a human body, it would stretch from the earth to the sun 100 times! Can you imagine being able to design a human body like God did? All of the details included in our DNA makes each of us the person He intended us to be.

God's purpose in the creation of man is that we can relate to Him. God is intelligent and powerful. He is also personal. When you consider all of this, it helps us better understand that we are made in the image and likeness of God.

Pray: Thank God for making you the special, unique person that you are!

DAY 3 THE UNIVERSE WAS MADE FOR LIFE

Read Genesis 2:8-15

God had everything ready in the Garden of Eden; He declared it "very good." Then, after it was prepared perfectly, He placed man there. What a picture of grace...creation grace! God created more than just the garden perfect for human life. He made the whole universe for us to live in. How can people believe that man is really just a cosmic accident? We were designed with a purpose just like the universe around us.

Science has discovered a very significant truth that corresponds with this truth from the Bible. Scientists now say that the universe was designed to support life! This reality is known as the "Anthropic Principle." Anthropic comes from a Greek word that means "human." This principle states that the physical structure of the universe is exactly what it needs to support life. We know that this is no accident or coincidence. We know this was part of God's design and plan.

Pray: Ask God to help you always remember that you were made with a purpose, just like the universe was made for life.

DAY 4 GOD MADE THE UNIVERSE PERFECT FOR LIVING

Read Romans 11:33-36

If we would just pay attention to the Word of God and the beauty, splendor, and design of our world we would live every moment of our lives rejoicing in what He has done.

Our little planet Earth, of all the many planets, moons, and stars in our universe, appears to be the only one that supports life. It may come in the future that others are found to likewise support life but at this time that has not been the case. Man is the crown of His creation!

All of the tiny details of the universe make the Anthropic Principle that we talked about yesterday the most powerful argument for the existence of God. It's not that there are just a few big things that may have resulted by chance. No, there are more than 100 tiny details that help prove there is an intelligent Designer who created everything in the universe.⁷

Parents, the following are some amazing facts that demonstrate the Anthropic Principle, but little ones may have a hard time understanding them. Share the ones you feel will help your children see the little details that contribute to life in our universe.

Here are just a few of the constants which demonstrate the constants of the Anthropic Principle.

- Oxygen comprises 21 percent of the atmosphere. If it were 25 percent, fires would erupt, if 15 percent, human beings would suffocate.

⁷ Geisler, Norman L., I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 105). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

- If the gravitational force were altered by 1 part in 1040 (that's 10 followed by forty zeroes), the sun would not exist, and the moon would crash into the earth or sheer off into space. Even a slight increase in the force of gravity would result in all the stars being much more massive than our sun, with the effect that the sun would burn too rapidly and erratically to sustain life.
- If the centrifugal force of planetary movements did not precisely balance the gravitational forces, nothing could be held in orbit around the sun.
- If the universe was expanding at a rate one millionth more slowly than it is, the temperature on earth would be 10,000 degrees C.
- The average distance between stars in our galaxy of 100 billion stars is 30 trillion miles. If that distance was altered slightly, orbits would become erratic, and there would be extreme temperature variations on earth. (Traveling at space shuttle speed, seventeen thousand miles an hour or five miles a second, it would take 201,450 years to travel 30 trillion miles.)
- Any of the laws of physics can be described as a function of the velocity of light (now defined to be 299,792.458 miles a second). Even a slight variation in the speed of light would alter the other constants and preclude the possibility of life on earth.⁸

What a mighty God we serve! He has graced us with just what we need!

Pray: Thank God for His design and plan for our universe.

DAY 5 MORE DIVINE DESIGN

Read 1 Chronicles 29:11-12

Here are more ways that the Anthropic Principle can be seen throughout the universe.

- If Jupiter was not in its current orbit, we would be bombarded with space material. Jupiter's gravitational field acts as a cosmic vacuum cleaner, attracting asteroids and comets that would otherwise strike earth.
- If the thickness of the earth's crust was greater, too much oxygen would be transferred to the crust to support life. If it were thinner, volcanic and tectonic activity would make life untenable.

- If the rotation of the earth took longer than 24 hours, temperature differences would be too great between night and day. If the rotation period was shorter, atmospheric wind velocities would be too great.
- Surface temperature differences would be too great if the axial tilt of the earth were altered slightly.
- If the atmospheric discharge (lightning) rate were greater, there would be too much fire destruction; if it were less, there would be too little nitrogen fixing in the soil.
- If there were more seismic activity, much life would be lost. If there was less, nutrients on the ocean floors and in river runoff would not be cycled back to the continents through tectonic uplift. Even earthquakes are necessary to sustain life as we know it.

Have you heard of the doxology? The doxology is an expression of praise to God. It is a short hymn that can be sung. After thinking about how magnificent our universe is because God made it this way, now is a good time to read the words of the doxology in praise to Him.

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

For more information on the Anthropic Principle, visit:
<https://www.jashow.org/articles/science/anthropic-principle/the-anthrop-ic-principle/>

⁸<https://www.jashow.org/articles/science/anthropic-principle/the-anthrop-ic-principle/>

WEEK 5 IS THERE REALLY RIGHT AND WRONG?

We have looked at two arguments for belief in God—the cosmological argument and the teleological argument. The cosmological argument tells us that since the universe exists, there must be a God who made it. The teleological argument tells us that since the universe has design, it had a designer and that designer is the God of the Bible. The first two arguments are scientific. The one we will look at this week is moral in nature. It tells us that since people have a moral law (or understanding of right and wrong) written on their hearts, there must be a source of that moral law.

The moral argument goes like this:

- 1.If God does not exist, there would be no understanding of right and wrong.
- 2.People do have a natural understanding of right and wrong.
- 3.Therefore, God exists.⁹

This week we will look at how the awareness of right and wrong points to a reason for belief in God.

DAY 1 IS THERE A MORAL LAW WRITTEN ON MAN'S HEART?

Read Romans 2:14-15

Here are two verses that we see lived out in the world every day. It seems like everywhere we look people have an idea of right and wrong. Even in different countries and different cultures, people agree that certain things are wrong and certain things are right. It's safe to say that we all have a moral code – or sense of right and wrong – written on our hearts, put there by God.

Have you ever done something to someone and it hurt their feelings? We all have. Sometimes we don't even know that our behavior is wrong – but that doesn't make it OK. Often, when others help us understand, then we can see how our behavior was wrong. It's not hard to see that kind words and actions are good. It's also not hard to understand that harsh, unkind actions cause a lot of trouble. God created us with a natural understanding of right and wrong.

⁹ Craig, William Lane. *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Kindle Locations 2076-2078). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

To help us understand how the moral law points to belief in God, think of it this way:

1. Every law has a law giver.
2. There is a Moral Law.
3. Therefore, there is a Moral Law Giver.¹⁰

This is another argument or answer to give when you are telling people why you believe in God. All people everywhere have a moral code that is inside of them. Therefore, I believe God put it there! There is a moral code written on the heart by the moral, creating, just, and loving God revealed in the Bible.

Ask: When was the last time someone encouraged you with their words? What is a kind action you could do for someone close to you?

Pray: Thank God for giving us a natural sense of right and wrong. Thank Him for His word that helps us understand how to make the best choices in all situations.

DAY 2 GOD'S LAW WRITTEN IN HIS WORD

Read Exodus 20:1-18

As we saw yesterday, there is a moral code written on the heart of people. However, God has also given us a moral code in writing. In fact, it was first written by the finger of God in stone and given to Moses. This is known as The Ten Commandments. There is a difference between the moral law written on man's heart and the law given in the Bible. It was given first to the nation of Israel so that they would know how to live in a right relationship with God.

The moral law and the written Mosaic law reveal a standard from God. These are not just random laws that God came up with to make us do things. These are laws that God gave us so that we could experience His very best. The standard of rightness is the very nature of God. God is the God of infinite love and infinite justice. In The Ten Commandments God gives ten moral standards. The first four deal with man's relationship to God and the remaining six deal with man's relationship with other men.

The written law in the Bible accomplishes several things.

First, it lets man know how to relate to God and other people. Much of this is already written on the heart, but God makes it clear and brings to light what is already written on the heart.

Secondly, the written law makes us aware of our failures and our tendency toward sin.

Thirdly, and most important, it makes us aware of the greater need of man. We must deal with the heart of the matter—our heart.

God is the eternal God who created all things. As creatures in His image, man is accountable and responsible to Him. God has written a moral code on our hearts and He has given us the written code in His Word. All of mankind is accountable and responsible to Him.

Ask: How many of the Ten Commandments can you name?

Pray: Ask God to give you a desire and hunger to read His word daily. His word will teach us how to live in a right relationship with Him and the people around us.

DAY 3 JESUS AND THE LAW

Read Matthew 5:21-48

The law that is written in the Bible is not just a boring legal document. God wants us to grow in wisdom and understanding so that we can enjoy all that He has for us. In the passage today Jesus shows us that the law is much more than a written document. If we just try our best to keep the law - so that we look like good people - we will realize that we can't do it. Jesus is showing us that He can change our hearts and make us more like Him. The real issue was the heart. Jesus did not come to make us good or moral, He came to make us God's very own children:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Geisler, Norman L., I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 171). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

This is becoming very overwhelming! Never did I think that an apologetics study could be a spiritual and moving experience. I am a believer in God:

- Because He has made me aware of Truth and He is the very essence of truth.
- Because He has made me aware that the universe shouts, “Creator.”
- Because He has made me aware that the universe shouts, “Designer.”
- Because He has made me aware that even at my best I can’t keep the law, and this shouts, “I am guilty.”

And now I know that the God of the universe did not send Jesus to make me a moral or good person, which is impossible. He came to make me able to call Him “FATHER.”

God is greater than I ever dreamed to this day and I know there is more to come!

Pray: Thank God for His greatness! Thank Him for being the Truth – and for caring so much for each one of us. Thank Him for His great love.

DAY 4 PAUL’S DISCOVERY ABOUT THE LAW

Read Romans 7:7-12

Because God’s law causes people to feel guilty, some try to change or alter His law to feel better about themselves. The written law of God (The Ten Commandments) points out man’s greatest problem—man is sinful! All people know murder is wrong. Therefore, the majority of people will not murder. We think we are good since we don’t do the BIG bad things. But what about lying or disobeying your parents? Even telling a “little lie” is still breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

The point of the written law is to help us know that we are not good or moral. Bottom line—we cannot fix anyone and especially ourselves. It was Filmmaker and Producer Cecil B. DeMille of the 1956 movie “The Ten Commandments” who said, “We cannot break the Ten Commandments. We can only break ourselves against them.” Paul was broken by them and then cried out:

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:24-25 (NKJV)

The goal of the law, both the one written on our hearts and the one written in the Bible, is to bring us to the God of the universe revealed in the Bible. The law on our hearts and in the Bible make it obvious we need a Savior.

Pray: Ask God to give you a heart of humility – so you can learn from Him about avoiding sin, even the sins that we sometimes think are OK. Thank Him for giving us a Savior to forgive us of our sin.

DAY 5 THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Read Galatians 3:19-25

Have you ever really wondered why God gave us the written law? Today’s passage shows us that the law acts as a guide, leading us to Christ. One of the main ways the written law leads us to Christ, is by pointing out our sin. Sin is one thing we all have in common! We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because that is what we are - sinners - and sinners sin.

The purpose of the law is to point out sin. In pointing out sin it also points you to the One who can do something about your sin—Jesus Christ. The law makes us aware that we need a savior and that Savior is Jesus. The law cannot save you but Jesus can! The law teaches us about our sin nature and Jesus does something about it. The law was not given to make you good but to make you aware that you are not.

Ask: Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior? He is the only One who can forgive our sin.

Pray: Give thanks to God for providing a Savior for those who believe. God loves us so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus, so that we could believe and be saved for all eternity!

WEEK 6 ARE MIRACLES POSSIBLE?

Here's a quick review of what we have talked about over the past 5 weeks.

- This is all about truth, and truth is that which corresponds to reality. We cannot deny that there is such a thing as truth. God has shown the truth in the Bible. Since there is truth, it had to have come from One greater than man. Someone who is beyond man and the known universe.
- The universe teaches us that something comes from something. The something is really a someone. The someone is beyond time, space, and everything in the universe. The God of the Bible corresponds to this reality.
- Design comes from a designer, just like a watch comes from a watch maker. There is not design without a designer, and that designer is the God revealed in creation, design, and the Bible.
- Morality is part of the human race that we are certain of. People know that there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong. This is because there is a moral code written on our hearts because there is a moral law giver. That moral law giver also gave us the written moral law in the Bible. The written law was given to help us feel law written on our hearts and to reveal that man is in violation of the moral code. As a result, God took steps to meet the moral standards so that man could be a child of God instead of simply making us moral. This would have violated His own nature of love and justice.

Because we know all of this, and we know that there is a God who is creator, designer, moral, just, and loving, it isn't hard to believe that He would perform miracles to confirm His message.

DAY 1 GOD AND THE OPEN BOX

Read Nehemiah 9:15-21

This illustration is taken from the book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*.¹¹

Imagine you have two boxes. The first box is all closed up with tape, so that nothing can get into it. This is how an atheist views the universe. (An atheist is a person who doesn't believe in the existence of God or any kind of gods.) They believe this universe is all there is and all there ever will be, and there is nothing that can affect it. With this view, there are no miracles because there is no supernatural realm.

Now, think about a second box; it is open. This box represents the worldview that says there is something outside of this universe, God. With the open box, someone who is outside of the box can reach in and move things around. Just like that, God can reach into our universe and perform miracles.

Since there is a God who created the universe out of nothing;

And since that universe has design requiring a designer;

And since the designed universe was designed to support life;

Since man, the crown of all of God's creative life, is a moral creature like the God who made him;

And since God has acted to have a relationship with man;

Then miracles are not only possible, they are probable!

Miracles are a way that God confirms His Word through one of His messengers.

The God of the Bible is involved in His creation!

Pray: Ask God to help you understand that miracles are real!

DAY 2 WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Read Exodus 4:1-9

What is a miracle? Is a miracle the same thing as a magic trick? Is it when the rain stops just in time for the fireworks on the Fourth of July? What makes a miracle really a miracle?

There are certain criteria that an act must meet to really be a miracle. These criteria are based on what we know of God. God has infinite power, supreme design and purpose, and complete moral purity. Doesn't it make sense for His miracles to show these things? So, the criteria for true miracles include:

- A. An instantaneous beginning of a powerful act, as evidenced by the Cosmological Argument (the beginning of the universe). This means that only God's power could be behind it, not a natural cause.
- B. Intelligent design and purpose, as evidenced by the Teleological Argument (the precise design of the universe for the purpose of supporting life, and the specified and complex design of life itself). This means that there is an obvious purpose behind the act. It may confirm a truth or confirm a messenger of God or to bring glory to Him.
- C. The promotion of good or right behavior, as evidenced by the Moral Argument (the Moral Law pressing on us). This means that the miracle could not be connected with anything wrong.¹²

So, is a magic trick a miracle? No, it's man controlled. Is the rain stopping for fireworks a miracle? No, it can be naturally explained. Miracles are unique, easily recognizable, and something only God can do.

Pray that God will help you understand what is and what is not a miracle.

DAY 3 DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND MIRACLES

Read Acts 17:22-34

Have you ever played Monopoly? In monopoly, you buy and sell properties. You charge people for landing on your properties. You have total control over your moves, buying properties, charging other people, and deciding when to sell.

¹¹ Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 202). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

¹² Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 202). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Divine providence is the authority of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe. This is much more than the control that we have in a Monopoly game! Divine providence means that God is in complete control of all things.

He is sovereign over:

The universe as a whole,
The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Psalm 103:19

The physical world,
that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45

The affairs of nations,
He rules forever by his power; His eyes watch the nations—let not the rebellious rise up against Him. Psalm 66:7

Human destiny,
But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased. Galatians 1:15

Human successes and failures,
He has brought down rulers from their throne but has lifted up the humble. Luke 1:52

And the protection of His people
In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. Psalm 4:8

This doctrine is the opposite of believing that things happen by chance or fate. We know God is always in control.

Pray that you will remember that God is always in control. Know that you can always turn to Him because He has a plan for you.

DAY 4 NO NEED TO DOWNPLAY MIRACLES

Read Exodus 7:1-7

Of all of the miracles God has performed, the greatest miracle is the creation of the universe out of nothing. This is by far the greatest and best known of all of God's miracles. If this is true, and it is God's greatest and best-known miracle, why would any of the other miracles in the Bible be brought into question?

There is no need to downplay any of the miracles in the Bible. Miracles overpower natural laws. We overpower these same laws of nature every day. When we fly in an airplane, when a missile goes into space, or even when someone catches a fly ball, we are overpowering nature. Since that is the case, the mighty, powerful, sovereign God can for sure overpower nature to accomplish His purposes. If we do these simple things, then doesn't it make sense that God can do so much more?

Parents, use this link to find and show your children a list of 125 miracles in the Bible. Remember, this is only a partial list!
<https://christiananswers.net/dictionary/miracle.html>

Pray: Ask God to help you see how powerful He is through learning about the miracles He has done.

DAY 5 MIRACLES AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Read Luke 11:14-23

Through God, Jesus has all power. He did miraculous things while He was on earth through that power, and one of those things was casting out demons. In these verses, that is what Jesus was doing, but the people questioned Him. They thought He might have been doing this with power of Satan (Beelzebub). This wouldn't have made any sense because then Satan is divided against himself, so in verse 20, Jesus tells the people:

But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Luke 11:20 (NKJV)

The power of God far outweighs the power of anyone else, you, me, and Satan. Jesus overcame the power of evil when He died on the cross and rose again. The miracles in the Bible show God's power over everything.

Pray: Ask God to have power over evil in your life so that you will live a life that directs people to Him.

WEEK 7 WHAT WAS KNOWN ABOUT JESUS AND WHEN WAS IT KNOWN?

Jesus is the central person in all of Christianity. Because of this, there is a lot of debate about the historical records of Jesus and whether or not they are reliable. As believers in Jesus we need to know and better understand the reliability of the historical record of Jesus. Of course, the most significant historical record about Jesus is the New Testament found in our Bibles.

DAY 1 A VERY EARLY CREED ABOUT JESUS

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

We all know people who aren't Christians. Maybe you even know of someone who is anti-Christian – someone who seems to dislike anything about Jesus and the Bible. Believe it or not, the Apostle Paul was like that before He met Jesus and became a strong believer. Likewise, C.S Lewis was an atheist who became a believer and a Christian apologist. The same can be said of a man named Lee Strobel. After his wife Leslie became a Christian in 1979, he interviewed experts on the Bible and Christianity in his search for the truth. In the introduction to his book *The Case for Christ* he writes:

“I’ll take you along as I interview thirteen leading scholars and authorities who have impeccable academic credentials.”¹³

The outcome was his own conversion to Christ and becoming an author and apologist. One thing that stood out to Mr. Strobel was the Apostles Paul’s use of creeds. These creeds were basic beliefs about Jesus that early believers shared with each other and agreed upon. Based on the historical evidence of when Jesus lived and when Paul wrote parts of the New Testament, there would not be much time for those creeds to be passed down as “legend.” In other words, these creeds were in place quickly – not something that people had time to make up and add to over generations.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 we see one of those creeds. If Jesus was crucified in 30 AD then Paul probably became a believer in about 32 AD. Paul was most likely given this creed by at least 35 AD. Certainly it was circulated and used in the early church well before Paul received it. This means that very early after Jesus’ death and resurrection, His true identity was being acknowledged among believers in creedal statements. It was not after hundreds of years of development of legend but very early.

¹³ Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Case for ... Series) (p. 14). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Very early in the historical record we read:

- Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures
- He was buried and rose on the third day according to the scriptures

The reality of this was verified by the Scriptures (e.g., Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:8-10) and by historical evidence verified by time in the grave and out of it, in the presence of the living.¹⁴ These two events which are the very cornerstone of Christian faith were prophesied and fulfilled and were in creedal form just after the events had occurred.

Very early in the historical record the identity of Jesus was very clearly known and was being circulated. This comes from very early historical records!

Ask: What are some good stories about you that probably everyone close to you knows?

Pray: Thank God for awesome power to save people – even those who are against Him and His truth. Ask God to use you to help others know the Truth.

DAY 2 HOW EARLY WERE THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS WRITTEN?

Read Acts 1:1-3

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Acts records the beginning of the church. It ends very abruptly with Paul under arrest in Rome. According to Eusebius, an early church historian, Paul was killed under the Roman Emperor Nero during a time of persecution. This would have taken place in the mid 60's AD. So Acts was completed before the early 60's and Luke's gospel even earlier.

Most bible-believing scholars believe that the New Testament books were all written by 70 AD. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek write:

The great and once-liberal archaeologist William F. Albright, after seeing how well the New Testament fit with the archaeological and historical data, wrote, "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80." Elsewhere Albright said, "In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the 40s and the 80s of the first century (very probably sometime between about A.D. 50 and 75)."¹⁵

The New Testament books were written very early and close to the events written about.

Pray: Ask God to help more people see the truth of the Bible. Thank God for the many evidences that show the reliability of His word.

DAY 3 MISSING HISTORY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Read Matthew 24:1-2

The disciples were very impressed with the temple architecture. It was a big, beautiful building and a prominent part of the Jerusalem skyline. But Jesus told his disciples that one day the temple would be completely destroyed.

Jesus' prophecy about the temple did occur, but not until 70 A.D. This major event is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. When we read the New Testament, the temple was still in place in Jerusalem. This is one of many clues that help us understand when the New Testament was written.

Chuck Missler says there are other historical events missing in the New Testament:

There are events in the New Testament that are conspicuous by their absence. There's no mention of Nero's persecutions which started about A.D. 64. Also not in the text is the execution of the leader of the Jerusalem church, James in A.D. 62. There was a Jewish revolt against the Romans in A.D. 66 which is not cited. Nor is the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 talked about. Why aren't these things mentioned? Because they hadn't happened yet. That's a strong authentication of the early dating of these books.¹⁶

¹⁴The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

¹⁵Geisler, Norman L., I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 243). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶Learn the Bible in 24 Hours, Chuck Missler, p. 164.

What if you were looking back at pictures of your family, but you suddenly realized that you're not in any of the pictures. Maybe you see your older brother or sister in the pictures or just your parents – looking a bit younger! You would soon realize that these pictures were taken before you were born. The same is true when you read a book and realize that some big historical events are missing. You can assume the book was written before the events took place. Looking at what events are not mentioned in the New Testament helps us to better understand when it was written.

Ask: What is one event in history that you wish you could have been there to see?

Pray: Thank God for giving us clues to help us understand how and when the Bible was written.

DAY 4 WHAT ARE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The New Testament did not come to us out of the first century in the form of twenty-seven separate books bound in leather with gold trim. Instead what we have is eyewitness accounts that were gathered and written down. They were then shared by believers and leaders in the first century. We don't have any originals because they were used so much and the material didn't last. What we do have are thousands of handwritten copies of the originals. These are known as manuscripts.

At last count, there are nearly 5,700 handwritten Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. In addition, there are more than 9,000 manuscripts in other languages. Some of these nearly 15,000 manuscripts are complete Bibles, others are books or pages, and a few are just fragments.

There are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. You can be encouraged that the New Testament writings are accurate because of the many reliable manuscripts that we still have today.

Ask: How many words do you think are in the Bible? (Between 780,000-800,000 depending on the translation) Could you imagine copying all that?

Pray: Thank God for giving us the Bible. Ask Him to give us a greater love for His word so that we will read, learn and memorize it.

DAY 5 OTHER EARLY CHURCH WRITERS AND THE MANUSCRIPTS

Read Luke 1:1-4

I have to say that the Bible is a miraculous book! Clearly God was in charge of how it all came together and He is the true Author.

Beginning in February of A.D. 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian passed three laws to try to stop Christianity. He felt that Christianity was a danger to Rome and was afraid that he would lose his power. These laws called for the destruction of churches, manuscripts, books and even the killing of Christians. Hundreds if not thousands of manuscripts were destroyed across the Roman Empire during this time of persecution. But even if Diocletian had succeeded in wiping out every biblical manuscript, he could not have destroyed our ability to rewrite the New Testament. Why? Because the early church fathers—men of the second and third centuries such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others—quoted the New Testament so much (36,289 times, to be exact) that all but eleven verses of the New Testament can be reconstructed just from their quotations. In other words, you could go down to your local public library, check out the works of the early church fathers, and read nearly the entire New Testament just from their quotations of it! So we not only have thousands of manuscripts but thousands of quotations from those manuscripts. This makes reconstruction of the original text virtually certain.¹⁷

This is how use of the manuscripts has provided for us the extremely reliable New Testament. The process of pulling it all together is known as textual criticism. This involves taking the thousands of manuscripts and then checking and crosschecking to come up with the most reliable text.

When you read your New Testament you are reading a very reliable text that reveals God's message to us.

Pray: Thank God for those who have gone before us, who were used by God to protect His word so that we can be sure that it was written exactly how God wanted it to be.

¹⁷ Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (pp. 227-228). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 8 OTHER SUPPORTIVE EVIDENCE

This week we will be looking at the New Testament. We can be confident that the New Testament is true based on sources other than the Bible itself. Some of these sources are extra-biblical sources that include early history beyond the New Testament and even those that may not be friendly to Christianity.

DAY 1 PASSING ALONG THE TRUTH

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

Notice that Paul was passing on what he had received. It is so important that we do the same thing with assurance of its truth. Most Christians trust the New Testament is true, but it's important for us to understand why we have confidence in it other than through our faith in God. What if Paul had only told one person what he received? Would the account be the same now? Definitely not!

Have you ever played the game telephone? It is when a group of people sits in a circle, and the person starting the game whispers a secret to one person next to him. This person then whispers to the next, and so on all around the circle. The last person usually doesn't end up hearing the same thing the first person said. If the Bible had been shared like this, through a linear transmission, it wouldn't be very reliable. That's not how the New Testament was shared though; it was shared through a geometric transmission where lots of people had written accounts passed down.

Imagine you have a dream of a recipe for never ending bubble gum. The best flavored gum that stays fresh no matter how long you chew it and can blow bubbles that are as big as balloons! As soon as you wake up, you write the recipe on a slip of paper. Then, you call your three best friends and share the recipe with them. They also write it down and share it with 10 more of their friends.

You're doing great making gum and selling it to stores all over, but then your dog eats the slip of paper with the recipe on it. You are stressing out! How will you continue to make the gum? You call your three best friends, but they lost the papers where they wrote the recipe because they're still chewing the same first piece of gum since it never gets old. They tell you not to worry, and they each call their 10 friends who they shared the recipe with.

You end up with 26 recipes written from those friends. When you spread them to look them over, you notice a few differences. Twenty-three of the copies are exactly the same. Of the remaining three, one has misspelled words, another has a mixed-up phrase (“stir then chop” instead of “chop then stir”), and the last has an added ingredient. Would you be able to come up with the original recipe easily? Would it be safe to say the 23 that are the same are correct? Maybe the one friend is a bad speller, the mixed-up phrase just needs to be switched around, and 25 people without an ingredient probably means the one person wrote something incorrectly. Even if you had more variations that had bigger changes, the original could still be reconstructed with a high level of confidence as long as you had enough copies.

This, in simplified form, is how scholars do “textual criticism,” an academic method used to test all documents of ancient times, not just religious texts. It’s not a random effort based on hopes and guesses; it’s a careful linguistic process allowing an alert critic to identify and correct the possible corruption of any work.¹⁸

We are blessed to have the New Testament. It is a miracle of God that it has been so reliably brought to us over the years.

Pray: Ask God to help you share the reliability of the Bible with people who may question it. Pray that God will help you see how valuable the information is since it has been kept safe for us to still have today.

DAY 2 HOW WERE THE 27 NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS DETERMINED?

Read 2 Peter 3:14-16

Peter wrote about the letters of Paul. These letters, along with other New Testament scriptures, were being read in the first century churches regularly and accepted as holy scripture. Very early in the first century, the church was acknowledging that scripture came from God and was inspired by Him (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The word canon means a general law, rule or principle by which something is judged. In the case of the New Testament Canon it was determined by God and then the early followers of Jesus to come to understand. Here is the standard that was realized.

- 1) Was the author an apostle or have a close connection with an apostle?
- 2) Is the book being accepted by the body of Christ at large?
- 3) Did the book contain consistency of doctrine and orthodox teaching?
- 4) Did the book bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit?

It appears that probably by the end of the first century, the accepted canon was already in place. However, it was not until special councils that the “official” canon was determined and accepted.

There were councils that got together to establish the books that would be included in the New Testament. It must be understood that God did the determining, and man simply came to affirm what God determined. Here is a chart that really drives it home.

The Incorrect View	The Correct View
The Church is the Determiner of Canon	The Church is the Discoverer of Canon
The Church is the Mother of Canon	The Church is the Child of Canon
The Church is the Magistrate of Canon	The Church is the Minister of Canon
The Church is the Regulator of Canon	The Church is the Recognizer of Canon
The Church is the Judge of Canon	The Church is the Witness of Canon
The Church is Master of Canon	The Church is the Servant of Canon ¹⁹

Our Bible is a miraculous book that God has been the One who has provided it, preserved it and protected it and delivered it to us.

Pray: Give thanks to God for revealing Himself to us!

¹⁸ <http://www.equip.org/article/facts-for-skeptics-of-the-new-testament/>

¹⁹ http://www.truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/7_The_New_Testament_Canon/index.htm

Day 3 NOT DONE IN A CORNER

Read Acts 26:24-32

Paul appeared before King Agrippa to make his defense. For Paul, it also, and probably most importantly, was an opportunity to proclaim Jesus. King Agrippa was known to be an expert in the customs and ways of the Jews. Paul told the account of his conversion (when he accepted Christ), and then, in response to Governor Festus' statement that Paul was mad, Paul said that the King knew these things about Jesus "since this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). The opposite was really true. Many of the non-Christian writers had mentioned things about Jesus that confirm what is written in the New Testament. It is obvious that Paul knew that most people, including King Herod, knew about the events surrounding Jesus.

The New Testament, and in fact the whole Bible including the Old Testament, is an amazing book and source of history and presentation of the truth about God and man. Flavius Josephus lived around 37-100 AD. He has been referred to as the greatest Jewish historian of all times, and he wrote about Jesus. Keep in mind he was not a believer. He was merely writing history.

Josephus wrote about Jesus:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.²⁰

He also wrote about James the brother of Jesus:

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the Sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.²¹

The events written about in the New Testament were not done "in a corner". They were written about as history not only in the New Testament but also in other ancient writings.

Pray that you are bold and confident in telling others about Christ like Paul.

²⁰<http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-18.htm>

²¹<http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-20.htm>

Day 4 NON-CHRISTIAN WRITINGS

Read John 21:20-25

This little talk between Peter and Jesus culminates with Peter asking about John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus in so many words tells Peter, "Don't worry about him, you follow me." Then the writer, John, wraps it up writing about his own testimony and writings and then adds:

"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen." John 21:25 (NKJV)

Indeed, there were many other things written about Jesus.

- Publius Cornelius Tacitus was a senator and a historian of the Roman Empire from 54 AD-120 AD.
- Celsus was a Second century Greek philosopher and critic of Christianity.
- The Jewish Talmud from about 200 AD is the primary source of Jewish religious law and theology.

Some of these non-Christian sources—such as Celsus, Tacitus, and the Jewish Talmud—could be considered anti-Christian sources. While these works do not have any eyewitness testimony that contradicts events described in the New Testament documents, they are works written by writers whose tone is decidedly anti-Christian. What can we learn from them and the more neutral non-Christian sources? We learn that they admit certain facts about early Christianity that help us piece together a storyline that surprisingly matches with the New Testament. Piecing together all ten non-Christian references, we see that:

1. Jesus lived during the time of Tiberius Caesar.
2. He lived a virtuous life.
3. He was a wonder-worker.
4. He had a brother named James.
5. He was acclaimed to be the Messiah.
6. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
7. He was crucified on the eve of the Jewish Passover.

8. Darkness and an earthquake occurred when He died.
9. His disciples believed He rose from the dead.
10. His disciples were willing to die for their belief.
11. Christianity spread rapidly as far as Rome.
12. His disciples denied the Roman gods and worshiped Jesus as God.

In light of these non-Christian references, the theory that Jesus never existed is clearly unreasonable. How could non-Christian writers collectively reveal a storyline congruent with the New Testament if Jesus never existed?²²

So, from history's records we find that Jesus was also known outside of Biblical writings. These obviously came from eyewitness accounts.

Pray: thank God for these sources who weren't followers of Jesus, but who can confirm so many things about Him.

DAY 5 HISTORY, ARCHEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF ACTS

Read Acts 16:6-15

How many details can you remember from places you lived, where things were located, how the trees looked before buildings were built, how the roads previously curved?

A little-known fact about the section of Fayette County where Harp's Crossing Baptist Church Fayetteville is located is that it was once known as Little Flock. When the founding group of Harp's Crossing Church were trying to determine its name, they came very close to calling it Little Flock Baptist Church. A little research showed that an old, abandoned, rundown building down Harp Road with no sign except "Keep Out" was the Little Flock Schoolhouse. Very few people today are aware of that. You either had to know it by experience or by those who knew and were familiar with the area.

In the days of Luke, who wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, there were things about the area where the events recorded in Acts that only a person living in the area or who knew people who lived in the area would know. In the passages you read today there are five specifics recorded that indicate Luke had to have been an eyewitness or knew one who gave him this information:

1. The proper form of the name Troas (16:8)
2. The place of a conspicuous sailors' landmark, Samothrace (16:11)
3. The proper description of Philippi as a Roman colony (16:12)
4. The right location for the river (Gangites) near Philippi (16:13)
5. The proper association of Thyatira as a center of dyeing (16:14)

This is just a portion of a list of 84 specific details classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer developed in a verse by verse careful study of the last 16 chapters of Acts. You can see the full list in [I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be an Atheist](#).²³

Historical and archeological studies give support to the reliability of the New Testament. The writers of the New Testament either experienced things as eyewitnesses or knew eyewitnesses.

Pray: Thank God for evidence of His love and power that you have seen and for the evidence that is recorded for us to read in the Bible.

²²Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (pp. 222-223). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

²³ Geisler, Norman L., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (pp. 256-259). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 9 HOW DO WE KNOW THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS TOLD THE TRUTH?

This week we look at what Norman Geisler calls the “The Top Ten Reasons We Know the New Testament Writers Told the Truth.” This is a full chapter in his book, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. When you consider all of these reasons together it is very convincing. So far we have looked at manuscript, historical, and archeological reasons as to why we believe what we believe. Now we will take a look at why we can believe the writers of the New Testament were telling the truth.

DAY 1 EMBARRASSING DETAILS ABOUT THEMSELVES WERE INCLUDED AND EMBARRASSING DETAILS ABOUT JESUS

Read Matthew 26:47-56

Have you ever had to tell an embarrassing story about yourself? Most people will avoid telling embarrassing details about themselves, if they can. In the New Testament, however, it is done many times.

In the passage you read today the disciples are very sure of themselves, that they would never “disown” Jesus (earlier in Matthew 26:33-35). Then, of course Peter denies knowing Jesus three times and all the disciples fled. (Matthew 26:56).

We also see the record of Peter, James and John falling asleep at a time when Jesus needed them most. Jesus has taken them to Gethsemane to pray before He is arrested, tried and crucified. At His greatest hour of need the three companions were sleeping and Jesus had to wake them each time.

There are many other embarrassing moments recorded in scripture, including the time Jesus rebuked Peter and called him “Satan.” There were even embarrassing moments about Jesus – times when people rejected Him or called Him a “mad man”. The bottom line here is that you do not include embarrassing details in a made-up story. Much more could be said but the main truth here is that the writers of the New Testament did not try to dress things up or make it sound better than it was. They merely told the truth and presented the facts. These along with all the other things so far definitely give reason for the hope we have.

Ask: Share about a time you were embarrassed. Is it tempting to make yourself sound better or is it easy for you to share embarrassing details?

Pray: Give God thanks for using all the parts of our lives to help us learn more about Him – even the embarrassing times. He can be trusted – even with our embarrassing moments.

DAY 2 THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS LEFT IN DEMANDING SAYINGS OF JESUS AND DISTINGUISHED JESUS' WORDS FROM THEIR OWN

Read Matthew 5:39-48

Yesterday we looked at the first reason to believe that the New Testament writers were being truthful. Do you remember what it was? (Answer: They gave embarrassing details about themselves and Jesus.) They were more concerned about being truthful than making anyone look good. When you're telling the truth, you include all the details. Today we look at two more reasons to believe they were telling the truth.

The NT writers left in demanding (hard) sayings of Jesus. They did not try to make the sayings of Jesus sound easier or more popular. Jesus had very high standards that the writers presented without trying to explain them away. Many of these high standards are spelled out in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The commands of Jesus are hard – even impossible – for humans to do. Perhaps that was the point though – we can't do it on our own...we need a Savior, Jesus.

The NT writers distinguished Jesus' words from their own. If the New Testament writers were writing the story on their own they could very easily have put words into the mouth of Jesus. However, Paul in particular made it clear when he was using his own words and not the Lords. You can read this in 1 Corinthians 7:10-12. This careful distinction is another reason to believe they were telling the truth.

Pray: Thank God for the high standards He gave us through Jesus. His commands show us that we need a Savior – we can't be good enough on our own.

DAY 3 TWO MORE REASONS TO BELIEVE THE WRITERS WERE TELLING THE TRUTH

Read Matthew 28:11-15

The New Testament writers include events related to the resurrection that they would not have invented. What in the world does that mean? If the story of the gospel, Jesus, the crucifixion and resurrection were made up by men, it surely would have been different.

First of all, consider who it was who buried Jesus. It was Joseph of Arimathea. This man requested Jesus' body from Pilate, took His body, wrapped it up and placed it in the tomb. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin. Here is the problem. It was not His disciples who took care of His body after His death. It seems that if this had been made up it would have been His disciples who buried Him.

Second, all four of the gospel accounts say that the first witnesses of the empty tomb were women. In Jesus' time, women were not considered reliable witnesses. The testimony of women carried no weight in a court of law. This would not be the way to establish an account if it were a made-up story.

The NT writers include more than thirty historically confirmed people in their writings. Consider just a few of the names that have been confirmed from history: Pilate, Caiaphas, Festus, Felix and the dynasty of the Herod's. The New Testament writers recorded accurately what they saw.

Think about it more: When we tell the truth, details are important. The bible is full of details that help prove that it is reliable and full of truth.

Pray: Give God thanks for the miraculous birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. All the details are important – even those that seem out of place.

DAY 4 MORE REASONS TO BELIEVE THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS WERE TELLING THE TRUTH

Read John 20:12 and Matthew 28:5

The New Testament writers include differing details. The two verses above seem to be conflicting. Matthew speaks of only one angel and John says there were two. However, the two accounts are not contradictory but simply different details from two eyewitnesses. Matthew did not say there was only one angel but that just one rolled back the stone and spoke. John says that Mary saw two angels. What is the difference? The difference is the testimony of two witnesses telling what they saw.

There are four gospel accounts. Each gospel writer recorded the history of Jesus from their own memory. Imagine if you and a group of your friends wrote separate stories about being at the same event. There would be some details you remember and other details you would leave out – but maybe your friends would remember some of the details you left out. You would all be telling the truth. Also, you would all very likely remember the big, major events similarly. This is what we see in the gospels. The writer didn't compare stories and copy each other. They remembered different details, but most of the major events of Jesus' life were recorded in all the gospels.

“The bottom line is this: agreement on the major points and divergence on the minor details is the nature of eyewitness testimony, and this is the very nature of the New Testament documents.”²⁴

The NT writers challenge their readers to check out verifiable facts, even facts about miracles. Take a moment to read 2 Corinthians 12:11-13. Paul was bold to write down and declare that miraculous signs had been performed in Corinth. The people of Corinth could have easily testified that this was not true. However, there is no record of disagreement with Paul’s statements.

Now why would Paul write this to the Corinthians unless he really had done miracles for them? No one would believe him again, if he was proven to be lying. The only logical conclusion is that

- 1) Paul really was an apostle of God,
- 2) he had the ability to confirm this by performing miracles, and
- 3) he had displayed this ability openly to the Corinthians.²⁵

Ask: Think of an event several of you experienced together recently. Try telling the story of what happened – each of you remembering as many details as possible.

Pray: Thank God for providing such a clear picture of Jesus in the gospels.

DAY 5 TWO MORE REASONS TO BELIEVE THE NT WRITERS TOLD THE TRUTH

Read Acts 2:22-24

Have you ever told a story and added some exaggerations to it so that it would sound more impressive? Maybe you caught a fish, but each time you tell the story the fish gets bigger! The gospel writers saw Jesus do miracles – and even though they were amazing experiences, they didn’t exaggerate or add extra details for excitement. Take for instance the miracle of Jesus restoring the ear of Malchus (See Luke 22:50). When the authorities came to arrest Jesus, one of the disciples (Peter) cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Jesus very simply, “touched his ear and healed him.” The miracles of Jesus and the others performed by the apostles were simple statements of fact that affirmed God at work.

²⁴Geisler, Norman L., I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 286). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

²⁵Geisler, Norman L., I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (pp. 286-287). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

When you read the four gospels you are reading the biblical historical account of the earthly ministry of Jesus. The writers of the New Testament were concerned with reporting the facts – not exaggerations.

The New Testament writers abandoned long-held sacred beliefs and practices, adopted new ones, and did not deny their testimony under persecution and threat of death.

Can you imagine leaving behind 1500 years of Jewish religion and traditions? The New Testament writers did not just follow Jesus and say He worked miracles and rose from the dead. They gave up many aspects of their ancient practices.

In Lee Strobel’s book *The Case For Christ*, J.P. Moreland says in an interview how incredible it was for these followers of Jesus, thousands of Jerusalem Jews including Jewish Priests to convert to Christianity:

[The Jewish people] believed that these institutions were entrusted to them by God. They believed that to abandon these institutions would be to risk their souls being damned to hell after death.

Now a rabbi named Jesus appears from a lower-class region. He teaches for three years, gathers a following of lower- and middle-class people, gets in trouble with the authorities, and gets crucified along with thirty thousand other Jewish men who are executed during this time period.

But five weeks after he’s crucified, over ten thousand Jews are following him and claiming that he is the initiator of a new religion. And get this: they’re willing to give up or alter all five of the social institutions that they have been taught since childhood have such importance both sociologically and theologically.

*. . . . Something very big was going on.*²⁶

Can you imagine? These loyal Jewish people almost immediately left their traditions and faith to follow Jesus! They must have been convinced that He was who He said He was.

Giving up on major traditions is one thing but going to their own death for their belief is quite another thing. All of the New Testament writers and early disciples were killed (martyred) because of their belief in Jesus. Can you imagine even one of them being willing to die for their beliefs if they were telling a lie about Jesus? No one is willing to die for a lie. The early New Testament writers were recording the truth.

Pray: Thank God for the New Testament writers who did not deny the truth, even when they were threatened with death.

²⁶ Strobel, Lee., *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Case for ... Series) (p. 250). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 10 DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the core of the Gospel message. Christianity centers around the resurrection of Jesus. It is the most significant miracle in history after creation. The resurrection confirms that Jesus was who He said He was and who the Bible said He was. This miracle is the event that caused Christianity to explode to the region and ultimately to the whole world!

DAY 1 A QUESTION OF HISTORY

Read Mark 16

Josh McDowell is a man who has done a lot of research about the resurrection of Christ. He said that the resurrection is one of the meanest tricks someone could have played on mankind, or it is the most remarkable fact of history.

“Here are some of the facts relevant to the resurrection: Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet who claimed to be the Christ prophesied in the Jewish Scriptures, was arrested, was judged a political criminal, and was crucified. Three days after His death and burial, some women who went to His tomb found the body gone. In subsequent weeks, His disciples claimed that God had raised Him from the dead and that He appeared to them various times before ascending into heaven. From that foundation, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and has continued to exert great influence down through the centuries.”²⁷

There is not another document from the ancient world that so many people were witnesses to or that more people wrote about. There are tons of famous historians who have done hours worth of research on the resurrection. Professor Thomas Arnold, a great scholar said:

“I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”

Brooke Foss Westcott, an English scholar, said:

“Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it.”²⁷

²⁷ <https://www.josh.org/wp-content/uploads/Evidence-For-The-Resurrection.pdf>

Those may be hard to understand, but the meaning is clear; THE RESURRECTION IS A FACT.

Pray: Thank God that the resurrection is a fact that led to our belief in Him today.

DAY 2 THREE PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

These verses give us three proofs of the resurrection. When Paul was writing these things to the people in Corinth, he knew they were believers. He began his argument with the truth that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the grave.

Proof #1-their salvation (vv.1-2). Paul had come to Corinth and preached the message of the Gospel, and the people's faith had transformed their lives. A huge part of the Gospel was the fact of Christ's resurrection. If Jesus had only died on the cross, He couldn't have saved anyone, and that's why the resurrection is so important. The people reading Paul's letter had heard the Word, trusted Christ, been saved, and now were living life knowing they were saved.

Proof #2-the Old Testament Scriptures (vv.3-4). When Paul wrote, "according to the Scriptures," in verse 3, he was talking about the Old Testament Scriptures. Many of the ceremonies that were done in the Old Testament were pointing ahead to Jesus, like sacrifices, the Feast of the Firstfruits, and other prophecies of Messiah's resurrection.

Proof #3-Christ was seen by witnesses (vv. 5-11). On the cross, Jesus was seen by many unbelievers; but after the Resurrection, He was seen by believers who could be witnesses of this event. Peter saw Him and so did the disciples. James was a half-brother of the Lord who became a believer after the Lord appeared to him. There were over 500 people who saw Him at the same time, so it could not have been a hallucination or a trick.

At this point, Paul's readers would say, "Yes, we agree that Jesus was raised from the dead." Then Paul would reply, "If you believe that, then you must believe in the resurrection of all the dead!" Christ came as a man, truly human, and experienced all that we experienced, except that He never sinned. If there is no resurrection, then Christ was not raised. If He was not raised, there is no Gospel to preach. If there is no Gospel, then life is hopeless and we are still living in sin. If believers who have died have no hope, we will never be able to see them again.

The conclusion is clear: Why be a Christian if we have only suffering in this life and no future glory to anticipate? The Resurrection is not just important; it is the MOST important because all that we believe hinges on it.²⁸

Pray that God will give you a clear understanding and faith to know the resurrection really did happen.

DAY 3 JAMES THE TRANSFORMED BROTHER OF JESUS

Read Mark 3:2-21, 31-35; 6:2-4

James was the brother of Jesus. He later became the leader of the Jerusalem church. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote about James in the first century:

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he (Ananus, the high priest) assembled the Sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ; whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.²⁹

This confirms that James was the brother of Jesus and that he gave his life for his part in the work of Jesus Christ. This isn't from the Bible, this is confirmation from an outside source.

But why did James have to give his life? Early on we see that James along with other family members were concerned about his big brother Jesus. They believed that He was "out of His mind" (Mark 3:21). It was clear that James was not a big fan of Jesus at that point. What was it that changed him? Obviously there had to have been something extremely convincing to transform this unbelieving brother into a believer and leader in the first century church. The resurrection was an event that opened James's eyes to see that his brother, Jesus, was the true Messiah.

Pray: Thank God for changing people's lives, just like He did James'.

²⁸Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 1.

²⁹Morison, Frank. Who Moved the Stone? (p. 91). Kindle Edition.

DAY 4 SAUL: TRANSFORMED BY THE RISEN JESUS

Read Acts 22:1-21

Saul was a Pharisee in Jerusalem who was designated to persecute the earliest people who believed in Jesus as God. What do you think Saul (who became Paul) thought about the controversy about the empty tomb and the missing body of Jesus? Do you think that he knew about the bribery of the guards to say that the body had been stolen (Matthew 28:13)? Or maybe he was focused on bullying believers. We know he was there giving his approval when Stephen was stoned to death for his faith.

Just a very short time later, Saul was transformed while on a business trip to Damascus to arrest and persecute believers. He encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. He was radically transformed.

Is there anyone who we could look and listen to more than Paul? He was working hard trying to stamp out the message of Christ, only to be drastically changed and become its greatest evangelist? Geisler and Turek put it this way, “If there was no resurrection then why did the greatest enemy of Christianity suddenly become its greatest leader?”³⁰ Is there a way to explain this change other than an amazing experience with the risen Lord? Perhaps the old hymn “He Lives” best expresses it for Paul, “You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart.”

Pray: Ask God to be as real to you as He was to Saul...totally life changing!

DAY 5 OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Read Isaiah 53

In the Old Testament, there are many passages that talk about the resurrection of Jesus. How could people have written about Christ hundreds of years before He was born? This could only be done through the divine inspiration of God. Psalm 22 is an example of these verses. King David is writing about his suffering, but it also tells of the suffering of Jesus at the time of His crucifixion. If you read Psalm 22 you can hear the experience of Jesus as He was going through the pain of His crucifixion. This was written by King David about a thousand years before Christ. Even more prophetic are the passages found in Isaiah 52 and 53. When you read these two chapters, it would be impossible to not think that it is written about Jesus in the Gospels. Even in Isaiah we read about Jesus: His birth, His suffering, and His resurrection.

In Acts 8 Philip encounters the Ethiopian Eunuch. He is riding in his chariot when Philip approaches as the Holy Spirit instructs and finds the man reading from the prophet Isaiah these verses:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.” Acts 8:32-33 (NKJV)

The Ethiopian Eunuch asked, “Of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or some other man?” Philip tells him that the prophet is speaking of Jesus, shares with him the Gospel, and the Ethiopian Eunuch receives Jesus. So, from the first century AD the passage in Isaiah was understood to be about Jesus.

In Psalm 16:10 we find a very clear passage about the resurrection.

“For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Psalm 16:10

Verses 8-11 of Psalm 16 are cited by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:25-28). Peter says that the Psalmist was referring to Christ. Paul uses Psalm 16:10 and Acts 13:35 applying it to the resurrection of Jesus.

We have seen so many reasons to believe in God, the God of the Bible who created all things. We have seen so many reasons to believe that the New Testament is true and that miracles are for real. We have seen a few of the many reasons to believe that Jesus was really raised from the dead. It is true what Frank Turek and Norman Geisler say that there are many more reasons to believe in the message of the Bible than not. In other words, it takes more faith to be an atheist than to be a Christian.

³⁰ Geisler, Norman L., I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 319). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 11 IS JESUS GOD?

Was Jesus just a man? Was He just a teacher? What does the Bible say? What does Jesus say? This is a huge topic and you need to be ready to tell people what you believe about Jesus and why you believe it. We have waded through many reasons for Christian beliefs and now we come to one more. Some people really do believe that Jesus was just a good man and teacher but is that a real and truthful option?

DAY 1 WHAT DOES THE OLD TESTAMENT SAY?

Read Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:18-23

J. Barton Payne in his Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy identifies 71 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Christ. Chuck Missler along with many others says that in the Old Testament Christ is concealed and in the New Testament He is revealed.

We don't have time here to go into all the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus but here is a chart from a sampling just in Isaiah:

Messianic Prophecies in the Book of Isaiah

1. He will be called before His birth to be God's servant (49:1).
2. He will be born of a virgin (7:14).
3. He will be a Descendant of Jesse and thus in the Davidic line (11:1, 10).
4. He will be empowered by the Holy Spirit (11:2; 42:1).
5. He will be gentle toward the weak (42:3).
6. He will be obedient to the Lord in His mission (50:4-9).
7. He will voluntarily submit to suffering (50:6; 53:7-8).
8. He will be rejected by Israel (49:7; 53:1, 3).
9. He will take on Himself the sins of the world (53:4-6, 10-12).
10. He will triumph over death (53:10).
11. He will be exalted (52:13; 53:12).
12. He will come to comfort Israel and to bring vengeance on the wicked (61:1-3).
13. He will manifest God's glory (49:3).
14. He will restore Israel spiritually to God (49:5) and physically to the land (49:8).
15. He will reign on David's throne (9:7).
16. He will bring joy to Israel (9:2).
17. He will make a New Covenant with Israel (42:6; 49:8-9).

18. He will be a light to the Gentiles (42:6; 49:6).
19. He will restore the nations (11:10).
20. He will be worshipped by Gentiles (49:7; 52:15).
21. He will govern the world (9:6).
22. He will judge in righteousness, justice and faithfulness (11:3-5; 42:1, 4).³¹

Pray: Ask God to help us see more of Jesus in the Old Testament. Thank God for the many prophecies and clues that strengthen our faith and provide us with more evidence.

DAY 2 JESUS WAS WITH GOD IN THE BEGINNING AND HE WAS GOD IN THE FLESH

Read John 1:1-18

The first sixty-four words of the Gospel of John are loaded with meaning. Add in the first nine words of verse 14 and we find that Jesus and God are one and the same. Jesus is the living Word of God. The living Word was with God in the beginning of creation. God's Word is eternal. Jesus is the Word of God and He is eternal. He was with God when He made everything!

All things were made by Him and for Him. All things are about Jesus and giving glory and praise to Him. All things in heaven, on earth and under the earth will worship Him (see Colossians 1:15-19). Jesus came to reveal the Father and all of creation reveals Him.

Jesus was with God in the beginning. He was God and is God. All things were made by Him and for Him. He also became flesh and dwelt among us. He was God in the flesh. He was at the same time fully God and fully man – can you imagine? Jesus was God living in history among man. Then, after Jesus was resurrected He gave the promise of the Holy Spirit – His Spirit to live in the believers forever. Jesus is living today in His followers through the Holy Spirit.

The beginning of the Gospel of John teaches us that Jesus was God in history, He was God in eternity past, and He is God today and always.

Ask: What is something you see in creation that reminds you of the awesome power and beauty of Jesus?

Pray: Give thanks to God for giving us His Son, Jesus, our All-In-All. Praise God for providing everything we could ever need through Jesus.

DAY 3 JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

Read Mark 14:61-64

Some say that Jesus never claimed to be God. That is hard to accept when you read the New Testament. Jesus made indirect claims:

God in the OT

Psalms 23:1
Isaiah 44:6
Joel 3:12
Isaiah 62:5
Psalm 27:1
Isaiah 43:11
Isaiah 42:8
1 Samuel 2:6

Claim

Shepherd
First and Last
Judge
Bridegroom
Light
Savior
God's Glory
Giver of Life

Jesus in the NT

John 10:11
Revelation 1:7
Matthew 25:31ff
Matthew 25:1
John 8:12
John 4:42
John 17:5
John 5:21³²

There are also several direct claims that Jesus made. The verse below is an example:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." John 8:56-58 (NKJV)

Jesus made a statement that sounded odd, "Before Abraham was I AM." Jesus was not trying to be grammatically correct. He was saying that He was the I AM. That was the name for God that His listener would recognize. God had revealed Himself to the Israelites in **Exodus 3:13-14** as "I AM WHO I AM." Jesus was saying He was God, the self-existent One.

When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, he asked Jesus if He was the Christ: *But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:61-62 (NKJV)*

Here Jesus was saying, "I am the Anointed of God—the Messiah."

Jesus clearly claimed to be God.

Pray: Thank God for giving us so much truth in His word. His word explains who He is and helps us connect the dots to understand more each day.

³¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

³² Geisler, Norman L., I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 343). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

DAY 4 JESUS CLAIMED TO FORGIVE SINS

Read Luke 19:1-10

Jesus claimed to forgive sins. This really upset the religious leaders of the time. They accused Jesus of blasphemy saying, “Who can forgive sins but God alone? (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21). In John 3 Jesus offered salvation to Nicodemus – one of those religious leaders who came to Him at night. Many times Jesus offered forgiveness of sin to those He healed.

A tax collector named Zacchaeus invited Jesus to his house one day. Zacchaeus was so excited about meeting Jesus that he said he would pay back everyone he had cheated. Jesus responded to him saying, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:9-10). Jesus called Himself “the Son of Man”, a title He used often to describe Himself. This title was used in Daniel 7:13. Jesus used the title to show His relationship to God “The Ancient of Days.” Jesus was claiming that He had authority to forgive sins, judge and save. Jesus knew He was sent from the Father, and as God in the flesh, He could forgive sins. This claim was clearly a claim to His Divinity.

Since Jesus claimed to forgive sins, He was making Himself out to be God, because He was.

Ask: What would you do if Jesus was coming over for dinner? (Have fun with this one...)

Pray: Thank God for providing a way to forgive our sins and bring us into a relationship with Him. Without Jesus we would have no hope. Pray that God will give you a chance to tell others about Jesus this week.

DAY 5 SO WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?

Read John 20:24-29

The disciples were telling Thomas that Jesus was alive and that they had seen Him. Thomas refused to believe saying that he would not believe, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side.” Thomas wanted the facts and the evidence before he would believe. Then when Jesus came into the room eight days later - even with the doors locked - He invited Thomas to touch His hands and side. Thomas was convinced and cried out, “My Lord and My God!” Thomas believed because of the evidence. But Jesus blessed those of us who would believe without seeing. The evidence is available.

So what are the options to believe about Jesus? He claimed to be equal with God. He claimed to be God. Others recognized Him as God and worshipped Him. He went about forgiving sins. He said He would rise from the dead (and He did).

We each get to decide if we believe Jesus is who He says He is. This is the most important decision we will ever make. After all the evidence we’ve looked at, I say with confidence that He is Lord! Is He yours?

Ask: Who do you say Jesus is?

Pray: Give thanks to God for all the evidence we’ve seen in these devotionals so far. Give thanks to God for sending His own Son to offer forgiveness to all who would believe in Him.

WEEK 12 WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT THE BIBLE?

The Bible Jesus used was the Old Testament. He quoted largely from the Old Testament often beginning, "It is written." Jesus affirmed the Old Testament, but we have more than the Old Testament. What about the New Testament? Jesus promised the New Testament and that it would come through His followers as the Holy Spirit directed.

DAY 1 JESUS BELIEVED THE OLD TESTAMENT

Read Matthew 12:29-41

It is very interesting today that many people do not believe certain aspects of the Old Testament to be literal history. For instance, the biblical historical account of Jonah is often taught as metaphor. (A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares things.) To believe that a man could be swallowed by a big fish and remain there for three days is hard to think about. Jesus used this account as literal (it really happened) when He said that He would be three days and nights in the earth like Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish. Jesus believed that Jonah was a real man, who wrote a real book, and was in the belly of a real fish for three days and nights.

- Jesus believed that Noah was a real person and that there was a real flood that swept people away (Matthew 24:37-39).
- Jesus believed that Abraham was a real man (John 8:56-58).
- Jesus believed that Lot and His wife were real people who escaped the destruction of the two real places, Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28-32).
- He believed that God really fed Manna to the people as they wandered in the wilderness (John 6:31).

These are just a few examples that make us aware that Jesus believed the Old Testament to be historical and reliable. That affirms that we, too should take the historical aspect of the Old Testament as literal. If Jesus did, so should we.

Pray: Thank God for the Old Testament.

DAY 2 JESUS QUOTED THE OLD TESTAMENT AS AUTHORITATIVE

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Many of the people who heard Jesus were amazed that He taught and spoke *“as one having authority”* (**Mark 1:22**). When Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, Jesus turned to the authority of the Word of God to counter His enemy. The Word of God, of course, was the Old Testament.

This event took place right after Jesus was baptized. Matthew 4:1 begins with the word *“then”* which tells us there was a chain of events. Jesus was baptized and *“Then He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.”* After His baptism and being affirmed by God His Father with the words, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,”* Jesus went out to contend with the enemy. It was then and there that He turned to the Word of God—the Old Testament—and resisted the devil. Jesus used the authoritative Old Testament to dismiss His most powerful enemy.

Jesus used the Word of God many times just like this. On another occasion in Matthew 5, He quotes from the Law in the Old Testament beginning with, *“You have heard it said of old.”* He then quotes portions of the Ten Commandments referring to their authority, and He takes the commands even further. Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets.

Jesus never made the scripture seem unimportant as some modern critics do; He never put it away as the Jewish leaders of His day had done with their Oral Traditions or criticized it, although He criticized those who misused it. He never contradicted it, nor did He oppose it.

For Jesus, the Old Testament was His biblical source of authority. Norma Geisler and Frank Turek write:

In fact, on ninety-two occasions Jesus and his apostles supported their position by saying *“it is written”* (or the equivalent) and then quoting the Old Testament. Why? Because Jesus and his apostles considered the Old Testament Scriptures to be the written Word of God, and thus the ultimate authority for life.³³

Pray: Thank God for His authority and the authority of His Word.

DAY 3 MORE OF WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE BIBLE

Read Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus taught that the Old Testament was the Word of God in seven different ways. We have already gone over how the Bible is authoritative and historical. We are going to go over the other 5 aspects of what Jesus taught about the Bible here.

Imperishable—In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that the tiniest little part of a letter in the Law would disappear. (Matthew 5:17-18)

Infallible—When Jesus was in a tough situation in John 10, He used scripture from the Old Testament. He said, *“the Scripture cannot be broken.”* When his life depended on it, Jesus quoted God’s Word. Again, in **John 17:17**, Jesus declared the truth of the scripture when He said, *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

Incapable of Being Wrong—When the Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus, He said to them, *“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God,”* (**Matthew 22:29**). Because the Sadducees were wrong, that means that the scriptures are not wrong, they are incapable of being wrong.

Scientifically Accurate—Christianity is built on historical events, such as Creation and the resurrection that can be tested through scientific and historic investigation. Since all truth is God’s truth, that means that science is also from God. Science confirms many of the claims of Christianity, and Jesus knew it would be this way!

His Ultimate Supremacy—Since Jesus taught that the Old Testament is authoritative, imperishable, infallible, incapable of being wrong, historically reliable, and scientifically accurate, doesn’t it make sense that it has ultimate supremacy of all other writings ever? There is no question that He knew the Old Testament was the written word of God that He came to fulfill.

Pray: Ask God to show you how important the Word of God is and how you should treasure it and spend time in it.

³³ Geisler, Norman L., I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (Foreword by David Limbaugh) (p. 357). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

DAY 4 JESUS PROMISED THE NEW TESTAMENT

Read John 16:5-15

The Old Testament and New Testament make a complete, combined book. Thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. It was written over several thousand years by more than forty authors. It is a unified whole. The New Testament was not written until after the end of Christ's earthly life. In fact, it was the plan for the books of the New Testament to come through His apostles. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. He promised that when the Holy Spirit came He would lead them into "all truth."

"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." **John 14:25-26 (NKJV)**

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." **John 16:12-13 (NKJV)**

Paul made it clear that what He wrote was not from man:

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." **Galatians 1:11-12 (NKJV)**

The bottom line is that the New Testament was promised by Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and produced by the apostles.

Pray: Thank God for keeping His promise to give us the New Testament.

DAY 5 AN UNBROKEN CHAIN

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

The early dating of the New Testament writings and especially the gospels has already been demonstrated. The early church fathers give a connection that enables us to see another reason to trust the reliability of the New Testament. Jesus said that His apostles would produce the books of the New Testament. The twenty-seven books that make up the New Testament were written by apostles or those confirmed by apostles. The apostles had also been confirmed by miracles.

What happened after the time of the writing of the New Testament? Through God's amazing wisdom, the New Testament books were brought into the second century by an unbroken chain. We know from an early church father's writings named Irenaeus that John the apostle had a disciple by the name of Polycarp. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp. We see an unbroken chain here connecting one of the apostles, John, who knew all of the apostles and New Testament writers. Polycarp lived from AD 69-155 and Irenaeus lived from AD 130-202. The apostle John lived until about AD 100. The amazing thing here is that between Polycarp and Irenaeus 23 of the 27 New Testament books are quoted in their writings and uphold that they are real.

Think about it this way. When Polycarp read, preached and quoted from the writings, it was basically the same New Testament Mr. Dennis reads and preaches from today.

Here we have an amazing unbroken chain that remains unbroken!

Pray: Praise God for the miracle of the unbroken chain that brings the Bible to us!

WEEK 13 EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT

Josh McDowell's book Evidence That Demand a Verdict was first published in 1972. There have been subsequent editions and a second volume. This book has had a huge influence on millions of lives. The magazine "Christianity Today" ranks it 13th on a list of the most influential evangelical books published after WWII. The title is self-explanatory. The evidence that is presented clearly demands a response—a verdict. Over the past twelve weeks, in daily devotions and in preaching, we have looked at a small amount of evidence regarding the Christian faith. If a person is truly open to the truth, they must decide to become a follower of Jesus Christ. If not, the problem is not lack of evidence; it is a choice to refuse to accept the evidence. This week we bring this to a conclusion. I hope you have grown in your faith. Faith comes by the Word of God. I hope you are more confident in your faith and more prepared to share with others why you have faith in Jesus Christ.

DAY 1 A BRIEF SUMMARY

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

God has done a great work in His glorious plan of salvation. He has made Himself known to us as a loving Father who paid it all to have a relationship with us.

This project has taken about six months and untold hours of research and preparation. When the work began, it was the hope of Mr. Dennis to provide a tool that can be either quickly shared or elaborately presented. Here is the best simple summary I could come up with. Go back and review. Study some on your own. Pull together little add-ons to help you elaborate when needed.

- TRUTH IS A PERSON AND THAT PERSON IS JESUS CHRIST
- TRUTH IS THAT WHICH CORRESPONDS TO REALITY
- BELIEVERS MUST BE PREPARED TO GIVE REASONS FOR THEIR FAITH
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THERE IS SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THERE IS DESIGN IN CREATION
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THERE IS RIGHT AND WRONG
- REASON TO BELIEVE: GOD CONFIRMED HIS MESSAGE WITH MIRACLES
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THE NEW TESTAMENT IS 99.5% TEXTUALLY PURE
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THE NEW TESTAMENT PRESENTS JESUS AS GOD
- REASON TO BELIEVE: THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS TOLD THE TRUTH
- REASON TO BELIEVE: JESUS REALLY DID RISE FROM THE DEAD
- REASON TO BELIEVE: JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD
- REASON TO BELIEVE: JESUS TAUGHT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

Pray: Thank God for the blessing of these devotions. Ask Him to bring them to your mind so you will be able to share your faith with others.

DAY 2 BE A LOVER NOT A FIGHTER

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

When we first began these devotions, we talked about the words “argument” and “argue.” These words are used in the courtroom to present proof and evidence in a court case, but they can seem negative when we hear them. Here’s more on these words from Mr. Dennis.

It does not matter to me if people use the words “argue” and “argument.” I just find those words to be aggressive. This is a personal thing for me, and I just thought at the end of this work I would put this in the form of a devotional. I really do not like to argue. In apologetics that is not really what we are to do. We are to present the reasons for our faith and to do so with “meekness and fear.” Regarding meekness, John Wesley writes, “For anger would hurt your cause as well as your soul.” Regarding fear he writes, “A filial fear of offending God, and a jealousy over yourselves, lest you speak amiss.”³⁴ All that to say I want to err on the side of grace, mercy, and kindness.

If you are like me, non-confrontational you will not have a problem that way. However, that does not excuse being silent. The instruction in 1 Peter 3:15 is to be ready to give a reason for what you believe. Tell people why you are a Christian. Make it something you can share in a few minutes if necessary or an hour if need be.

Isaiah 1 is a courtroom scene where God is bringing charges against Judah for her unfaithfulness to the covenant. Then God says in verse 18 “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.” He is saying let’s talk about this and I will tell you what I am going to do. He is presenting His plan and His reason, and it is dominated by grace. All we do and say should be dominated by grace. Presenting our reasons for what we believe is not done to prove we are right but to say this is what I believe and the reason for it.

Pray: Ask God to help you show grace, mercy, and kindness as you share with others what you believe.

DAY 3 THERE ARE ONLY TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

Read John 3:17-21

Jesus was in the conversation with Nicodemus where He tells Him He must be born again. Jesus then gives Him the famous verse, **John 3:16.**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

In this same context, Jesus tells him that there are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who believe and are not condemned, and there are those who do not believe and are condemned already. There is not a third option. A person either believes that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save, and therefore the person will live forever: now and with God in heaven after this temporal life is over. The second option is to not believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save and therefore be condemned and separated from God forever in hell. C.S. Lewis had a way of saying things which only he could say:

“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.”³⁵

The evidence that has been presented (and this isn’t close to all of it!) demands a verdict or decision.

If you have not made this most important decision, is now the time? **Pray,** thanking God for sending Jesus to die on the cross for you.

DAY 4 BACK TO THE WORLDVIEW

Read Psalm 119:18

Looking back to Week 1 Day 2, we talked about worldview. Everybody has one either by conscious choice or default.

All worldviews, to be reliable, must provide thorough and adequate answers to five questions. These are the most significant questions we can ask in life, and here are the short answers to each.

1. **Origin: Where did we come from?** We were all created in the image and likeness of God being fearfully and wonderfully made.

³⁴ Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.

³⁵ LEWIS, C. S.. THE GREAT DIVORCE (Kindle Locations 541-543). UNKNOWN. Kindle Edition.

2. Identity: Who are we? We are creations of supreme worth to God, however negatively flawed by sin and thus separated from the God who made us. This is remedied only through the reconciling work of God in making us His children.

3. Meaning: Why are we here? We are here to reflect God's image and likeness and to bring Him glory.

4. Morality: How should we live? We should live godly, holy lives reflecting the God who made us. This is humanly impossible without Jesus being our sacrificial substitute.

5. Destiny: Where are we going? Since God is holy and is a God of justice, our sins must be punished. God provided a way for our sins to be paid and to bring us into relationship with Him. This relationship cannot be earned; it must be received as a free gift.

To receive this, one must receive God's gift of salvation through the death of Jesus Christ, which took away our sins. This is the eternal destiny of the one who becomes a believer in Jesus Christ and as a result, a child of God.

Pray: Thank God for revealing answers to these big questions. Thank Him for providing a way for our destiny to be with Him.

DAY 5 A PERSONAL WORD IN CLOSING FROM DENNIS WATSON

This seems odd. It is the end of this study and devotional guide. I have been moved and brought to tears many times on this journey, and I am there again. As I was pulling it all together for this last week and now this last day my mind went back to week 5 day 2. It was a moment that the Word of God in written form and the Word of God written on my heart brought me to a moment of celebration and rejoicing in what God has done to accomplish His gift of salvation for me. It just seems appropriate to close with those words from that day:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13 (NKJV)

This is becoming very overwhelming! Never did I think that an apologetics study could be a spiritual and moving experience. I am a believer in God:

- Because He has made me aware of Truth and He is the very essence of truth.
- Because He has made me aware of that the universe shouts, "Creator."
- Because He has made me aware that the universe shouts, "Designer."
- Because He has made me aware that even in my best intentions I violate the moral code He has written on my heart and the written code He is given in the Bible, and this shouts, "I am guilty."

And now I know that the God of the universe revealed in the Bible has made me aware of Himself and that He did not send Jesus to make me moral or a good person which is impossible. He came to make me able to call Him "FATHER."

To this day, God is greater than I could ever dream, and I know there is more to come!

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