

God

(Rev. 05/25)

Can God ever become evil?

And the quick answer:

Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. - James 1:17 (NLT)

God, by His very nature, is good; He cannot become something He's not! I've had people argue, "If God can't choose to become evil, then He isn't all-powerful!" To which I usually respond, "Grow some gills because you're spending the next 24 hours underwater!" They reply, "That's not fair! I'm not a fish!" Exactly! We cannot change the fundamental nature of who we are, and yet we complain when God can't either? How much sense does that make?

God IS good. It's not a choice; it's His nature! He could no more be evil than we can grow gills! It's not a failing, it's simply who we are. Also, God, because He IS good, gets to determine what "good" and "evil" are. In God's case, "good" is whatever He would do and "evil" is whatever He would NOT do.

While we may not always agree with what God allows to happen in our lives, we do have a promise that we can hold on to that may help us when times are tough:

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. - Romans 8:28 (NLT)

We may not like what we're going through – it may feel like God is allowing a lot of evil in our lives – but we also know that if we focus on Him, God can use anything for good.

The better question is, then, "Are you focusing on God or on your problems?"

Can the existence of God be proven?

Um...yes? We could talk about the order of the universe; the complexity of the beginning; the fact that a bunch of nomads in the desert argued that time, space, and matter had a beginning; the fact that the first thing created after time, space, and matter was light; the "Goldilocks" principle; etc.

But, instead of writing a full thesis, let me deal with a simple, logical proposition. There is something called "The Kalam Cosmological Argument"; formulated, I think, in the 6th century A.D. (don't quote me on that) by an Islamic scholar. Basically the argument says:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its beginning.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its beginning.

In other words, if something comes into being, something else has got to make it happen. I cannot create myself; that's a self-defeating proposition. If I'm not here, how do I create me? If I am here, where did I come from before I could create myself?

Next, the universe began to exist. Nobody, not even Stephen Hawking, could get rid of a beginning to the universe – although he DID try! There's a starting point for this universe.

Therefore, something that is NOT the universe had to make the universe begin!

I've heard Michio Kaku being interviewed wherein he theorized that our universe is part of a giant, expansion field that creates bubble universes. And when he talks, people nod and move on. But I have a couple of problems with it:

First, he has zero proof of this theory AND there's NO WAY to test it. If I told you that the universe was created by giant, mute, insubstantial, invisible pixies, it would possess the same amount of scientific evidence! (Funny, but nobody has jumped on my "scientific" bandwagon, even though it has the same amount of evidence as the expansion field!)

Second, what he has done is INCREASED the complexity of space-time-matter, not reduced it. Where does this field come from? Is it infinite? If so, how does an infinite field continue to exist when according to thermodynamics it all falls apart? What causes it to set the parameters different in each universe? Etc.

So, is the Kalam a perfect proof for God? No. But it certainly is a logical proof!

By the way, if you look it up, atheists hate it! If you read their arguments, pay close attention! Many of them subtly change the Kalam to debunk it and/or they argue counterpoints, rather than the main premise itself! Either way, it does make fun reading!

Do God's emotions work the same way ours do?

Note: The rest of the question included: **There are many cases where a human would have acted differently. If His are different, does that mean that He didn't include that part in "creating us in His image"?**

If you wrote this question, I would love to know an example of when a "human would have acted differently". Without that piece of information, this may not fully answer your question, but I want to try anyhow.

First of all, we have to understand what emotions God displays in the Bible. These include:

- Anger – Psalm 7:11; Deuteronomy 9:22; Romans 1:18
- Compassion – Psalm 135:14; Judges 2:18; Deuteronomy 32:36, Mark 6:34
- Grief – Genesis 6:6; Psalm 78:40, John 11:35
- Hate – Proverbs 6:16; Psalm 5:5; Psalm 11:5
- Jealousy – Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:14; Joshua 24:19
- Joy – Zephaniah 3:17; Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 32:41
- Laughter – Psalm 37:13; Psalm 2:4; Proverbs 1:26
- Love – 1 John 4:8; John 3:16; Jeremiah 31:3
- Sadness – Matthew 26:38

(This list is adapted from gotquestions.org)

Second, the thing that you have to realize about God is that He experiences His emotions purely.

- When God is angry, He is angry for all the right reasons! People have done things to hurt others, they've done things to corrupt justice, and their actions violate His commands. At no time does God get angry because He's having a bad day and wants to take it out on someone.
- When God is jealous, He's jealous because His People – those who **already** belong to Him – are ignoring their promises to Him. At no time does God get jealous because someone “might” walk away or “might” be sneaking around and seeing someone else.
- By the same token, God's laughter and joy are almost always based on sinners coming to salvation. (Read the “Joy” verses above!) God doesn't laugh at other people's suffering or misfortunes. (Have you heard any jokes that were “inappropriate” that you laughed at?) The only time God laughs “at” someone is when a wicked person makes plans to hurt the righteous! (Psalm 37:13) Even then, God gives the wicked time to turn from their ways before they face judgment!
- Finally, His love is pure – it's about what He can give to us, not what He gets from us. Humans, we can tend to use people; but God wants us to turn to Him, to love Him of our own free will. And to do that, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins, so that we can experience His love for us firsthand!

Third, our viewpoint is limited when compared to God's. It's easy to look at our emotions, confined within our tiny, mortal bodies, and use our experiences to judge God.

The biggest example of this that I hear is, “God told the Israelites to wipe out the Canaanites! How cruel!” Actually, the Canaanites were evil, practiced child sacrifices, encouraged others to sin, etc. God gave them time to repent – the 40 years that Israel was coming – and then He told Israel to kill off any who remained in the land because this was the last group of hardcore, evil people who refused to repent or run away!

Ironically, Israel left some of them alive; and, just like God warned, the Canaanites led Israel astray, attacked them regularly, and caused them no end of pain...all because Israel didn't listen to a God who knew better...

I sincerely hope this addresses your question. If not, I am sorry! Please come and find me and we can dig into this more!

Does God see the future?

If God is all-knowing, does He see the future? Yep! That's why we have the idea of prophecy – God knows what's going to happen and He tells it to a human who writes it down. Ta-da!

Where it gets kind of weird is, “If God knows the future and knows what we're going to choose, does that mean we really have 'free will'?” The answer is still “yes”! Let me explain what I mean by using the greatest example possible:

I LOVE Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. I have read all of the stories many times, and still pick them up when I need a break. I know the characters well and, because I've read the story to the end, I know what choices they will make, how they will view things, and how everything will be resolved. From my viewpoint, the story is already written – I KNOW how it will end and, in fact, because it's written down it can't end any other way! However, from the viewpoint of Holmes, the game is still afoot and he still needs to go through the steps of his investigation. Holmes has free will, I have foreknowledge.

(Sorry, was just looking for an excuse to put in a Sherlock Holmes reference in here!)

God had to come from somewhere, didn't He?

Okay, this is a complicated one and I'll try to keep it simple. We KNOW the universe had to have a beginning. How? Because the laws of Physics (read up on thermodynamics) teaches that the universe has a constant mass and energy and that everything falls apart.

We also know that the universe is expanding, so if you run the clock backwards you get to a point where it had to originate. In other words, no matter how old the universe is, there was a place and a time where the whole thing got rolling, a beginning. Scientists jokingly called it the “Big Bang” when it was first proposed, and that name stuck.

If the universe had a beginning, doesn't that mean that God has to have a beginning, too? Yes...if..! If God was made of matter or energy and His existence was based on the laws that we know govern the universe, then God HAS to have a beginning! (He would have to have parents of some sort!)

But what if God was something...more? The Bible tells us in Genesis 1:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. - Genesis 1:1 (NLT)

If Genesis is true, then God created time (the beginning), space (the heavens) and matter/energy (the earth). Because He is the Creator of time, He isn't bound by it! Because He is the Creator of space, He can be everywhere simultaneously. Because He is the Creator of matter/energy, He must be more than what we can see with our physical senses, but that's a topic for another conversation!

The other thing we know about God is what He has told us through His prophets:

The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: - Isaiah 57:15a

In other words, God told Isaiah, “Hey! I'm not some created thing; I am the Creator of ALL things! I was around before anything was and will be around when it all ends!”

Based on what God tells us about Himself, we can be pretty sure that He isn't something that had to be created somewhere along the way! He is what we call “eternal”. That means He has always existed and will always exist; no need for parents at all!

God often is said to soften or harden our hearts. Why? Isn't that directly interfering with our agency?

I've already somewhat answered this as part of the question, "If we have free will, why does God sometimes intervene?"

This time, though, let's do a case-study on God hardening someone's heart! In Exodus 7, Moses and Aaron go to ask Pharaoh to release the Nation of Israel. Needless to say, the most powerful ruler of the most powerful nation, a man who believed he was related to the gods, didn't really care too much about what God had to say!

Next starts a war, with God going to teach the world an object lesson through Egypt. In Round One, the magicians try to defeat Moses and Aaron. They do magic tricks – and we know that they're just tricks because we have their notes – but God does miracles, and they lose. Then, we're told something curious:

Pharaoh's heart, however, remained hard. He still refused to listen, just as the LORD had predicted. - Exodus 7:13 (NLT)

So, who hardened Pharaoh's heart? Pharaoh did! He didn't believe the miracles. (If you ever want a full discussion of this, we have to do it by phone/voice because it's a long – but fascinating – story!)

And then the plagues start...

There is a plague of blood. (God is gunning for the magicians AND a couple of Egyptian "gods" with this plague.) The magicians copy it – on a much smaller scale – and then we find another quirky verse:

But again the magicians of Egypt used their magic, and they, too, turned water into blood. So Pharaoh's heart remained hard. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had predicted. - Exodus 7:22 (NLT)

Again, it isn't God that's hardening Pharaoh's heart; it's Pharaoh. He doesn't care for his people, he doesn't care for the God of Moses and Aaron, he doesn't care that the magicians can only do pale copies, and he doesn't care that the gods of Egypt aren't listening to the prayers of their priests! It's his country and he refuses to listen to anyone!

Next comes a plague of frogs, with another fun verse:

But when Pharaoh saw that relief had come, he became stubborn. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had predicted. - Exodus 8:15 (NLT)

So Pharaoh lies AND hardens his heart...again!

Next is the plague of gnats. By the way, each of these is an attack on gods, priests, and magicians! This plague is followed by the verse:

"This is the finger of God!" the magicians exclaimed to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart remained hard. He wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted. - Exodus

8:19 (NLT)

This time, the Pharaoh's own magicians tell him that these are miracles...and he won't listen to them! He refuses to change! Still his choice...

Next is the plague of flies and another verse:

But Pharaoh again became stubborn and refused to let the people go. - Exodus 8:32 (NLT)

So, again Pharaoh lies and again he makes a choice!

Next is the plague on livestock, with Pharaoh staying stubborn. (Exodus 9:7) Then the plague of boils, with Pharaoh staying stubborn. (Exodus 9:12) There's a plague of storm/hail, with Pharaoh lying and remaining stubborn. (Exodus 9:34-35)

Finally, you hit the plague of locusts in Exodus 10. Here's where we finally find the verse we're looking for:

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart again, so he refused to let the people go. - Exodus 10:20 (NLT)

God basically says here, "Okay! You wanted a war with me? You wanted to pit your magicians, priests, and gods against me? You wanted to lie to the men I sent to you because you thought I was too dumb to figure it out? Game on! You and your nation are about to become a ghost story; something that other countries will share in whispers of fear! Something that will cause grown men to shake in terror!"

Pharaoh lied. Pharaoh made his choice, no matter how much his people suffered. Pharaoh started this...but God is going to finish it. And the final plagues go after the biggest of the "gods": darkness is an attack on Ra, the Sun God; and death of the firstborn goes after the god-man, Pharaoh...

So does God harden Pharaoh's heart? Certainly! Did Pharaoh make that choice multiple times before God did? Yep! (I think that's the only time that I can think of when God "hardens a heart".)

Now, on the flip side, God softening hearts is usually tied to a story, too! In the Book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king; a position of great responsibility and trust. He was a good worker and he has a positive attitude. When Nehemiah allows the king to see his sadness – something that was a crime in that culture – God softens the king's heart to respond kindly.

But, this is something that would probably NEVER have happened if Nehemiah was a jerk, if he slacked off in his work, if he didn't have a past history of being positive and helpful, etc. Nehemiah started the work on building the relationship with the king; God just nudged the king to respond in kindness to the man who had proven himself faithful and trustworthy!

So, in summary, this isn't a capricious act on God's part; it's an extension of the decisions already being made by the humans in the story! (By the way, I can't think of many more examples! If you

have a specific instance, please let me know!)

How can we love and follow God after He punishes us?

All right, this is a tough question – not because it’s hard to answer, but because it involves a different perspective: a parent’s viewpoint.

First, though, I want to use a different word. I don’t want to refer to this as “punishment”, which means *“to inflict a penalty for the commission of (an offense) in retribution or retaliation”*. Instead, I want to look at this as “discipline”. What’s the difference? While both may involve pain, punishment is done as a penalty; discipline is done as correction to help someone learn to do better.

With that out of the way, let’s look at a passage in Hebrews 12:

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? - Hebrews 12:7-9 (NLT)

Okay, with that thought in mind, let me ask you a question: I have two children. If I allowed my daughter to touch a hot stove, am I a loving father or not? I mean, if she does, she’ll never touch one again, right? She’ll have permanent damage, but she’ll have learned a lesson. On the hand, I could slap her on the wrist to keep her hand away. I cause short-term pain, but she learns without having scars. Which is more loving?

Let’s go more extreme. We have a rule: No drugs in our home. If one of our children brought drugs home, we would sorrowfully help them to pack their bags and leave. But, shouldn’t we let it slide? Maybe it’s not such a big deal, right?

If I DO let it slide, what have I taught them? That doing something bad AND illegal doesn’t really have consequences. If they overdose on drugs because I taught them it was “okay”, did I help them? If they get arrested by the police, will the police and judges just look the other way or will my children spend time in prison? Will they end up dead? Which is more loving?

You see, none of us ever wants to be disciplined. We want to do our things, make our choices, and we don’t want anyone to tell us “no”. But it’s not love if we don’t discipline. Instead, we’re setting our children up for failure, suffering, or even death.

If we DO discipline, we may risk our children not loving us, but they get to live and, if they learn, thrive. It’s not easy to have God discipline us, but the alternatives are always worse.

How do we KNOW there's a God?

The simple answer? We can't! Okay, moving on... Just kidding! Actually, this is a GREAT question and I wish I could spend a long time giving you an answer, but I can't. Instead, I want to hit the

highlights of the arguments for God; and, if you have more questions, please come and talk to me.

First, there are the things we can observe. The Bible tells us in Romans 1:

They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. - Romans 1:19-20 (NLT)

Paul tells us that when we see the world, we're seeing God's workmanship and so we know there's a God. Paul tells us, "If you're looking for God, look around you!" If we do that, what do we see? Beauty, order, detail, and a plan; not random chance. Pretty good evidence for God in my opinion!

Second, we have the words of the Bible. Did you know that in the Bible there are people who actually saw and talked to God? These include: Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:21-22), Enoch (Genesis 5:22,24), Abraham (Genesis 12:7), Isaac (Genesis 26:24), Moses (Hebrews 11:27), Joshua (Exodus 33:11), Gideon (Judges 6:12), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5) and Jesus (John 8:38). There are a whole lot more, but this is an introduction...

Based on the number of people who claimed to see God, we have quite a large group! We have to decide if their testimony is true. In a court of law, if you had ten people all stand up and say the same thing, would you believe them? You have to decide that.

Third, we can listen to the words of Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God:

Jesus shouted to the crowds, "If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. - John 12:44-45 (NLT)

If we believe that Jesus is who He says He is, then there has to be a God.

Finally, and probably the weakest argument, is what we experience. I KNOW that when I asked Jesus to forgive me, He did! I've seen lives of prisoners and drug-dealers turned around by God! I've listened to the stories of murderers who now help people because of God! I've seen how people committed to God have gone out and changed their world, not for glory or riches, but simply because God told them to! (Can atheists show you proof like that?)

Basically it comes down to who you choose to believe. If you think the Bible is full of myths and the church is full of idiots, then if God showed up in person, you wouldn't believe in Him. If you're willing to give Him a chance, however, you may find your own life changed...

In closing, let me share a thought with you. Richard Dawkins, a famous atheist, was once asked in an interview what he would need for God's existence:

"I used to think that if somehow, you know, [a] great big giant 900 foot high Jesus with a voice like Paul Robeson suddenly strode in and said "I exist. Here I am". But even that, I actually sometimes wonder whether that would..." - Richard Dawkins, Religion

Is that a “scientific” basis for choosing not to believe in God...or a personal one?

How do you know if you believe in God?

The answer is that only you can know that for sure. But here's some verses to help you out:

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. - John 3:16-18 (NLT)

The first step is to decide if you believe in Jesus. Do you think of Him as the Son of God or as a part of some story? If Jesus is just some guy in a storybook, then you have a problem because a fictional character can't save anyone! If you're not sure that Jesus is real, why don't you pray and ask God to help you know that He's real?

Next we have:

For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” - Romans 10:13 (NLT)

Have you called out to God? That seems pretty easy, but what do we say?

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. - Romans 10:9-10 (NLT)

In other words, you feel sorry for your sins (mistakes), you pray and admit that you believe that Jesus is Lord, that God raised Him from the dead and that He can save you. You ask for forgiveness for what you've done wrong, and you ask God to guide us. You ask all of this in Jesus' name. By the way, you have to mean it. God isn't fooled by the words we speak, He sees the thoughts in our hearts!

If you've done this, you ARE saved.

By the way, God doesn't expect us to have our lives perfect; He wants to help us! God also doesn't ask that we never doubt; He just wants us to turn to Him and then spend our time learning about Him!

Finally, salvation is NOT about how we feel about God; it's about what He's done for us! Sometimes life gets in the way and we “feel” like God is far away and we wonder if we're saved; it doesn't change what God has already done – and continues to do – in our lives.

How does God help more than one person at a time?

This takes us more into the nature of God. If God isn't matter or energy like humans are, then what is He? The Bible tell us something about this:

"For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." - John 4:24 (NLT)

These words were spoken by Jesus, the guy who claimed to be God's Son and who then proved it by rising from the dead!

If God IS a spirit, then He's not limited by human failings. We can't be everywhere at one time, but God can be in all places at the same time! Also, as a spirit and as the Creator of time, God can be in all times at the same time. In other words, God is everywhere at all times. Even better than that, any Person that can speak and cause the entire universe to appear at His command probably has the power to help anyone.

This is hard to wrap our heads around, because God isn't like we are! He's so much more!

How tall is God?

Well, God is a spirit, which means He doesn't have a physical body like you and I do. Because of that, God doesn't have a set height. If you mean "How tall is Jesus", again we don't really know. There's only one clue that we have that can help us answer this question, and that's in a prophecy found in the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament:

My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. - Isaiah 53:2 (NLT)

Most experts agree that this chapter is actually discussing the Messiah, the Savior who was to come. (That's Jesus, in case you weren't sure!) Because of this verse, we know two things about Jesus' height: Jesus wasn't exceptionally tall, nor was He really short.

But, here's where it gets fun! Based on the skeletons of people from Jesus' day, the average height of an adult, Jewish male living in Israel was between 5'1" and 5'6" tall! (I'm 5' 11", if you want a comparison!) That means that Jesus would be about the height of a modern, Middle School boy!

If God is everywhere, why can't we feel Him?

To help answer this, let me give you a very basic example. As I type this, I'm sitting in my office at work, drinking Diet Dew, and listening to music. While I'm physically in my office – my body is actually here – I can imagine sitting on my couch at home, a blanket wrapped around me, the Christmas lights turned on, and my dog snuggled up at my feet.

From a certain viewpoint, my mind – my spirit – can be at home while my body is sitting here at work. This example fails because my body is stuck someplace else, even while my mind free-rooms. (I'm sure your brain has NEVER checked out and gone somewhere else during the school day, right?)

God, on the other hand, is NOT limited by having a physical body. Let's take a look at a Bible verse:

[Jesus said] "For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." - John 4:24 (NLT)

The Bible tells us that God is a Spirit. (Not a ghost; you have to die to be a ghost!) Because He is a Spirit, God can be everywhere that He thinks of. Since He has the ability to create time, space, and matter, He can keep track of it all, too. That means that God's thoughts can be everywhere at all times.

But the hard part, for us anyway, is that because God is a Spirit, it means that we can't reach out and touch Him. It's like reaching out and trying to touch air – not wind, but air! We know it's around us, we know we're breathing it in, but unless the wind is blowing or we're having trouble breathing, we don't really notice the air. Does that mean that it isn't there? Nope. It just means that we don't "experience" air all the time, even though it's around us every minute of every day.

If God knows all, and knows what we are going to do before even we do, why are we on earth in the first place? If it really is to test our faith, he would already know whether we would succeed or fail.

For this one, you're asking me to tell you what God is thinking and why. I'm not sure I feel comfortable with that; however, I can give you an analogy that might help:

I LOVE Sherlock Holmes! When I get time, I curl up with the leather-bound Complete Works of Sherlock Holmes, settle in, and read. (Usually in winter and when I'm wearing comfy, fuzzy jammies and slippers!) Even though I've read each story multiple times, I still enjoy reading it!

Now, let me ask you a question: from my perspective, do I know what the stories are? Certainly! I've read them before! I know the steps – and missteps – the characters will make. I know the solution long before Holmes and Watson even get the case!

But, what's Holmes' viewpoint? When the client comes into the room or the telegram is delivered, does he know how the story will end? No. Does he know where he should go or what the end result will be? Not remotely!

For Holmes, the story is playing out in real-time, he lives it as he goes on his adventures! He gets to make his own choices, free from interference, and whether those are the right choices or not he has yet to discover. From my perspective, the story is finished and the choices have been made.

I think, on some level, that must be what it is like for God.

Now, you did mention something I'm not sure of... You said "...if it really is to test our faith..." I actually don't find that in the Bible! We're born and then we can choose to have faith in God or not; it's not that we had faith at birth.

Barry's Note: This came from a young gentleman who grew up as a Mormon. As such, this may be a difference between Mormon theology and my studies.)

In the Holy Trinity, what's the difference between God and Father?

One of the main differences that we need to keep in mind when we talk about God is that He isn't just one person; He's three people in one. When we talk about God, we talk about The Father, the Son, and The Holy Spirit, right?

So God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Holy Spirit is God. But, at the same time, The Father is NOT the same person as the Son who is NOT the same person as the Holy Spirit.

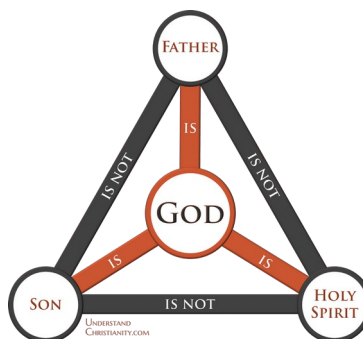
If you don't understand that, let me draw you a picture...literally.

- Imagine I drew a circle on a piece of paper in green ink. Do you see it? (Here's where your imagination kicks in!) Good. That green circle represents God the Father. Now you need to understand this: there IS actually a layer of ink on the paper, right? That circle exists on its own.
- Now, let me draw another circle right on top of it, but this time with a red marker. This red circle actually is a layer of ink that's on the paper. Is it the same as the green circle? No, it's different right? One is green and one is red. But are they both part of the circle? Yes.
- Now let me draw one more circle in blue. The blue circle is a different layer of ink from both the red and the green, right? But all three of them are the circle.

With this drawing, are all of the colors distinct? Do they all have their own characteristics? Certainly. But are they all part of the same circle? Yes. More importantly, can you separate the three circles from each other? No.

And that's kind of the way that God is. He's three distinct, unique people – just like the three colors are separate and distinct; but, at the same time, He's one being that we call “God” – just like the three colors are one circle.

By the way, there's another image I can give you that may or may not help:



If you need more, please ask!

Is the relationship between God and man similar to the relationship between man and

animals?

I don't know that I've ever been asked a question like this, so thank you! (I love new thoughts!) To answer this, though, we need to look at a couple of verses dealing with the creation of both:

Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." - Genesis 1:20 (NLT)

Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. - Genesis 1:24 (NLT)

The first thing to notice is that God speaks animals into existence...just like He created land, skies, stars, etc. His Word makes it a reality.

But take a look at what God does when He makes humans:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." - Genesis 1:26 (NLT)

When we read this, we think "image" means that we look like God. But, if you think about it, that doesn't make sense since God is a spirit. How do we who are flesh look like a spirit?

Instead, we are created in His likeness – we have personalities, minds, emotions, wills! We can enjoy things, we can laugh, we can love. We have capabilities that are denied the animals because we, in some small way, are like God.

Even more than that, check this out:

Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. - Genesis 2:7 (NLT)

God gets His "hands dirty" when He makes us. He kneels in the dust and makes us personally! Then He breathes into us His breath and we become a living soul! Because we have God's breath in our lungs, we are created to be on a different level than animals. (We're told in Genesis 6 that animals have the "breath of life", but we literally have God's breath in us.)¹

So we are made to be in a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. There is "give and take" as we talk to God and listen to Him in return. There is a desire for fellowship on both parts. There is the ability to know and understand. (Humans get there eventually. See 1 Corinthians 13:12.)

Because of all of this, I would argue that the relationship is VERY different between God and us than it is between us and animals; just as there's a profound difference between the relationship I have with my children – who are in my image – and the relationship I have with my dogs.

¹ When God breathes into us, He gives us a soul. It's literally "inspiration" – God's Spirit in us!

Is there any biblical or other indication that God's name YHWH, when man was created, God made it so every human had to say his name when they breathe through the mouth?

Note: The rest of the question included: **Inhale it naturally makes the YH sound and when exhale naturally creates a WH sound?**

The name "YHWH" is the name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:15:

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh (YHWH), the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. - Exodus 3:15 (NLT)

This name is often referred to as the "Tetragrammaton". This is considered "the proper name of God" according to most sources and is usually translated as "LORD" (all caps).

The problem is, the Jews, afraid of using God's name incorrectly, stopped saying it and substituted a bunch of other words. Because of that, over time, we actually LOST the way to pronounce God's name! Even worse, because Hebrew originally didn't have vowel markings, we can never reclaim it. The word "Yahweh" is our best guess, but nothing more.

As far as the "breathing sound" when you say God's name...we don't know HOW to say God's name, because the Jews lost the pronunciation out of fear! What if it's "Yay-ha-way-hee"? It could be. It could be infinitely MORE complex...or simple. We don't know. Because of that, the idea that it's based on breathing is a nice sentiment...but probably NOT accurate.

For more, you can also check out: <https://www.gotquestions.org/YHWH-tetragrammaton.html>

What is "God"?

I've been seeing questions like this a LOT lately, and I love to answer them! But there's one thing I would like to change here. "What" means that we're referring to an object, a "thing". But God isn't a "thing"; He's a person! (He's THE Person!)

So, who is God? If the Bible is correct – and based on about 30 years of trying to disprove it, I'm pretty well convinced that it is – then God is:

- The One who created the universe out of nothing. (Genesis 1:1)
- The One who designed it to have order and meaning. (Psalm 19:1-6)
- The One who created humans to be in His likeness. (Genesis 1:26-27)
- The One who made us to be in a relationship with Him. (Genesis 1-3)
- The One that we humans rejected. (Genesis 3:1-7)
- The One who sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our mistakes. (John 3:16-17)

And the One who, if we believe in Jesus and ask for forgiveness, WILL forgive us so that we can live with Him forever in Heaven.

If the Bible is right, then God is all of these...and so much more! That's who God is!

Why did God create us? Did He create us for fun? What was the point? He didn't have to make us, there is no authority higher than Him, He didn't have to love us, He didn't have to send His Son to die. He could have lived forever, and we could never have existed.

Short Answer: I don't know. (Whew! Done!) Probably not what you were looking for, right? The problem is your asking me to understand the mind of God, and I don't feel comfortable speaking for Him... But, there ARE clues in the Bible that can help us figure it out.

The first thing we know about the creation of humans comes from Genesis 1:28:

Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." - Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

From this, we can see that God made us to be in charge of the earth. So, at the very least, God made us to be caretakers of His creation.

The second thing we know about the creation of humans comes from Ephesians 2:10:

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. - Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

Based on this, we can see that God considers us the highest example of His creation and that He wants us to do the good things that He (God) planned for us to do! (Did you ever stop to think that God has a plan for you?)

The third thing we know about the creation of humans comes from Matthew 5:16:

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - Matthew 5:16 (NLT)

Everything we say and do is to point people back to God. Someone who looks at our life should be able to see God in us. (No pressure, right?) Do we treat others with kindness or do we bully others? Do we build others up or tear them down? Do we reach out in love or lash out in anger? Our lives – especially in the way we treat one another – are meant to show people who God is! With that, how are you doing?

The final thing we know about the creation of humans comes from 1 Corinthians 1:9:

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. - 1 Corinthians 1:9 (NLT)

For some unknown, inexplicable reason, God actually WANTS us! He wants to have a relationship –

this verse says “fellowship” – with us. Even when we turn away, even when we disobey, God STILL wants us to live for Him and, ultimately, with Him! Does He needs us? No. Can we do anything for Him? No. But He still wants us, just the same.

There are more examples that I could give, but that’s a good start. However, rather than just end it here, maybe I can explain this in a slightly different way:

I have two children: Isaac and Lauren. When I come home at the end of the day, sometimes there are messes that I need to clean up, problems that I need to solve, and conflicts that need resolution. At the end of the day, they can’t really help me to do my job, advise me on what action I need to take, or even tell me what projects are more important. They can’t help me; all they can do is give me a hug, tell me about their day, and tell me they love me.

And that’s enough...

Why do we exist?

Basically for today I only want to look at two possible answers: Scientific answers to why we exist and God-based answers to why we exist. (There are other viewpoints, but these two are, in my opinion, the critical ones to consider!)

Option #1: Science says we’re an accident.

If scientists are right and the universe happened by accident, then nothing we do or say matters. None of us have value, worth, or purpose if this is a random universe. Even more than that, if this all “just happened”, you can’t even have ideas of “good” or “bad”, “right” or “wrong” because the universe simply doesn’t care! Give to the poor or steal from somebody; in an accidental universe, it doesn’t matter!

To sum up this view, you have no point, no value, no worth, no importance, can’t accomplish anything meaningful, can’t do anything worthwhile, and have absolutely NO hope because there’s nothing to put “hope” in! If you think this sounds kind of depressing, I’ve known a lot of atheists who struggle with this, too!

But...

Option #2: God created us on purpose.

If God is the Person who created the universe, that changes things...everything! Why? Because it means that God made us with a purpose and a plan! We have value because God says we have value! We are known, we are loved, and we are wanted! And, God, since He created the universe, gets to set the rules for “right” and “wrong”, “good” and “bad”.

To sum up this view, God made you; you are special; you were made to have a relationship with God; you are loved, valued, and wanted. If you think that sounds...amazing, then you need to know that God also tells us who we are and who we can become, and His definitions for us are life-changing!

If God’s not a “thing”, then we’re hopeless and nothing matters. But, if God is real, if He DID create the universe, if He created us, then He can – and should! – affect everything else in our lives!

Why does God love us?

This is another brilliant question! The answer is: I don't know! (How's that? Can I stop now? Probably not...) Okay, to answer this, we need to look at one main verse in the Bible:

But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. - 1 John 4:8 (NLT)

All right! This is a short verse, but notice what it says. It says that God IS love. Not that God DOES love us; not that God LIKES to love us; but that God IS love! It's His nature; it's part of who He is.

Let me explain this in a slightly different way. I breathe air. Do I (usually) stop to think, "Gee! I should breathe air?" Nope. It's something I do naturally, I don't think about it. Instead, it's part of who I am, right?

Well, God is like that with love. According to John, love is just a part of who God is; and, because it's so basic to His nature, His love comes out in everything He does!

So, when God looks at us in love, it's not because we're that amazing...we're not! It's because God made us, God knows us, and He wants us to come back to a close relationship with Him!

By the way, before I leave this question, I need to explain one thing: "Love", in English, is kind of a junk word. ("I love my new phone!" and "I love my wife!" both use the same word, even though they mean totally different things!)

When God says He loves us, it means: God wants what's best for us, He longs to spend time with us, He values us, and He enjoys it when we spend time with Him! God's love – true love, in fact – gives what's best!

And what does God give to prove He loves us?

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16 (NLT)

That's why God loves you and how God loves you. Pretty cool, right? (By the way, there IS a longer answer in the addendum!)

Why does God make decisions that hurt us?

This is a HUGE question and I've been asked it a lot recently. I'm going to give you a "basic" answer here, but there really is a lot more to this! (I've preached a couple of sermon series on this topic!)

Idea Number One: God sometimes let's bad things happen to us as a test.

First of all, if you get time, go read the Book of Job. In Job 1:9-11, we find that it's Satan that asks to hurt Job; not God. Here's the response:

“All right, you may test him,” the LORD said to Satan. “Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don’t harm him physically.” So Satan left the LORD’s presence. - Job 1:12 (NLT)

God allows Satan to take everything away from Job, but God also limits what Satan can do. While God does not cause the bad things to happen, He DOES allow them.

Job goes through some incredibly tough times: his family is killed, his wealth wiped out, his wife becomes mean, his friends are jerks, his health is destroyed, and it looks like it's all bad. In the end, though, Job gets to talk to God face-to-face and God restores Job and blesses him in ways that had never been seen before. Admittedly this is not a fun experience, but Job learns a lot about faith in God from his suffering.

Idea Number Two: God sometimes let's bad things happen to us to meet a need.

Next, we have to look at someone else: Esther. Esther is living a Godly life, she's doing things right, and she's content where she's at. Then King Xerxes – who is kind of a pig, by the way – throws a temper tantrum and then has his men round up all of the beautiful women in the land so he can have sex with them and find a new queen.

As a result of the king’s decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king’s harem at the fortress of Susa and placed in Hegai’s care. - Esther 2:8 (NLT)

Esther's life has just changed dramatically! She goes from a Godly home to the palace; from an uncle who loves and takes care of her to a King who just wants to use her; and from everything she knew to an unfamiliar place. But God has a reason for her to be there!

Later in the story, a man named Haman throws a temper tantrum – the guys in this story are...quirky – and decides to kill all of the Jews. Esther, a Jew, is also sentenced to die if the order is carried out. If she speaks up, she will die; if she stays quiet, all of her friends and family will die. Then she gets a message from her uncle:

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: “Don’t think for a moment that because you’re in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?” - Esther 4:13-14 (NLT)

God saw that there would be a need, so He put Esther into a place – the ONE place! - where she needed to be to save her people. It doesn't mean that Esther doesn't go through pain to get there; it just means that the pain has a purpose. The end result of this story? King Xerxes really does fall in love with Esther; the Jews are saved; Esther becomes a hero (and famous); and the Jews still celebrate her to this day!

I've seen people take the junk in their lives – the divorce of their parents, drug and alcohol addictions, rape, and molestation – and use their experiences to help others going through the same circumstances.

I never want you to experience pain, but if God can use it to help someone else, is it worth it? It was for me!

Idea Number Three: God sometimes let's bad things happen to us to correct us.

Next, we see that God uses pain to correct things we're doing wrong:

My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline, and don't be upset when he corrects you. For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights. - Proverbs 3:11-12 (NLT)

Notice this is “correction”, not “abuse”. If my son was reaching for a hot burner on a stove and I swatted his hand away, am I doing it to help him or to hurt him? Well, if he succeeded in touching the burner, he would have blistered the skin on his hand and done a lot of damage. My swat on his wrist may sting, but it certainly won't leave a scar! God does this to us, too.

In my family, God has used a lot of pain to teach us how – and how not – to live!

In closing, that's just a start to a very, very big topic! I would love to go into more, but it'll have to wait! If you're going through some tough times right now and want some answers, you can always come and talk to either myself or any of the adults. We're all here to help you, if you'll let us!

Why is God a “thing”?

Actually, this is a BRILLIANT question, so thanks for asking it! Unfortunately, you may not like my answer. To begin this topic, we need to go back to the very beginning:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. - Genesis 1:1 (NLT)

While this may not seem like a big deal, it's the biggest of maximum deals...est! (Get the idea that this may be a big thing?) What this verse says is three things:

- “In the beginning” is a measurement of time. It says that time – yep, the time that we all know and love – had a beginning! Even more incredible – and much harder to visualize – is the fact that there was a “time of no time before time”. (That hurts my head!)
- “The heavens” is actually referring to space. This verse says that the space we now exist in had a beginning. Even more incredible – and much harder to visualize – is the fact that there was a “place of no space before space”. (My head hurts worse, now!)
- Finally, “the earth” refers to matter. This verse says that matter – everything around us – had a beginning!

By the way, these ideas aren't just found in the Bible. Scientists who believe nothing about God are now convinced that time, space, and matter – our entire universe – had a starting point! It's kinda quirky that a bunch of nomads living in the desert 3,500 years ago happened to figure that out without

the aid of laser, telescopes, and supercomputers! It's almost like Someone who had been there told them what happened, right?

So, if God is the Person who created the universe, then there is a LOT of stuff that we can learn about Him from just the first chapter of the entire Bible, Genesis 1! We know that:

- God is eternal. (He exists outside of time since He created time to begin with!)
- God is a spirit. (We're told this in John 4:24, but we know He existed before space!)
- God is all-powerful. (If you doubt that, try making a universe from nothing!)
- God is creative. (Take a look at the photos coming back from Hubble and James Webb!)
- God is personal. (He created us to have a relationship with us!)

There are more things we can tell, but that's enough for this question!

So, why is God a "thing"? Because if He's real, if He created the universe, then He made...us. You and I. (Now's a good time to check out "Why do we exist?")

Why is God so obsessed with being worshiped? It doesn't seem very godlike to only allow people eternal happiness if they believe that he exists, despite contradictions in His book, fallible leaders, and real world proof that parts of the book are silliness or just flat out wrong.

All right, forgive me, but this feels like a loaded question, based on the words used. If you want an answer, I can give you one, but I'm hoping you'll read this all the way through.

The first part: Why is God "obsessed" with being worshiped? Actually, short answer, He's not! According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, worship is defined as:

- 1: to honor or show reverence for as a divine being or supernatural power*
- 2: to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion*

In other words, worship is what WE do to show how much we appreciate Him! When we see how amazing He is – God created the universe by speaking into the void! When we see how loving He is – God gave us His Son to die for our mistakes! When we see how caring He is – God doesn't want anyone to perish! When we've seen all that He is – and He's WAY more than we can even imagine – and all that He's done – and we'll NEVER wrap our heads around the fact that God died for us – then we show reverence, respect, honor, and devotion to Him! It's a natural outcome.

But God never demands that anyone worship Him; He never forces anyone, either. How could He? I've mentioned a similar analogy before, but if you clap a gun to my head, I may tell the world that you are the most amazing human I have ever met! Do I mean it? Not remotely! I just don't like the alternative option that involves you tossing a bullet my way!

Now the Bible tells us that God DOES get jealous when we give our worship to other created things. But this comes down to a difference in word definitions:

Envy: The feeling we get when we want what belongs to another.

Jealousy: The feeling we get when what belongs to us is given to another.

Any reverence out there BELONGS to the God who created us, not to something He created. And, because we give what belongs to Him to something else, God has every right to be jealous! But God is never envious because everything in this universe is His!

That's the short answer to Part I...

Part II, on the other hand, is the more difficult part: *It doesn't seem very godlike to only allow people eternal happiness if they believe that he exists...*

I'm guessing, based on this, that you have an opinion about God. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it would appear that you don't like the way God does things. Is this fair? If so, let me ask you a question: How SHOULD God decide who goes to Heaven?

If an atheist truly hates God, should God make them go to Heaven anyhow? If God should let everyone in, what about John Wayne Gacy, a serial killer who liked making little children scream as they died? Does he make it? How bad would you have to be for God to kick you out? Should God bring Hitler to Heaven? That man was directly responsible for the deaths of around 70 million people worldwide!

I'm assuming that, on some level, you would like to have a standard of who makes it to Heaven and who is sent to Hell, right? So, what's the standard?

Would I make it? I've done things you can't imagine, including the fact that I trained to kill a man and actually set out to do it! (That's not hyperbole, by the way; it is true. I'm not who I was, thank God!) I've used people, I've gone my own way, and I've even stood on the rooftop of my apartment in Chicago and cursed God out. Where do I belong?

God's standard is simple and clean: believe in Him or not. And then God goes the extra step to make sure that everyone, everywhere, has the opportunity to find Him:

"But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the LORD. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." - Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NLT)

Everyone on the planet, no matter who they are, no matter where they live, have a God-shaped hole in their lives. People try to fill that hole with sex, drugs, power, fame, wealth, and a thousand other useless pursuits. I know! I was one of those people. It wasn't until I became a Christian, that I found out what I was missing all along!

I absolutely LOVE the way C.S. Lewis put it:

“If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.” - C.S. Lewis

Also, there’s this:

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world. - Psalm 19:1-4a (NLT)

I’ve known people who have become Christians after looking through the lens of a telescope and realizing that “It’s all an accident!” is an insufficient explanation. I’ve read of scientists who found God by looking through a microscope and realizing “It all just formed on its own!” requires greater faith than believing in God!

God isn’t hiding from us; instead, He left His fingerprints everywhere! We just have to decide if we will choose to accept what is right in front of us.

Part III of this is the last part: ... *despite contradictions in His book, fallible leaders, and real world proof that parts of the book are silliness or just flat out wrong.*

Okay, I make no excuse for “fallible leaders”. I really do NOT want people to follow me, because what if I lead them wrong? Other, more gifted leaders have made mistakes, so it’s not like I can’t! But, if we define “faith” only by the leaders who represent it, then does that mean we can define:

- Democrats by Hilary Clinton alone? (She wants to rewrite the Constitution.)
- Republicans only by Trump? (He wants to...well, he’s Donald Trump. ‘Nuff said!)
- Race-relations by what we see on television?

I could probably give you a billion other examples, but we’ll keep this short. If you want to know what the Democratic Party, as a whole, stands for, it’s wrong to base it on one person, even if she’s a “leader” in that organization! The same goes for Trump and the Republican Party. Also, my black brother-in-law and I get along pretty well, so how is that possible in light of what we see on television?

To assume that the ones who get the most “press” are the best representatives of a group is, at best, problematic; at worst, it obscures the truth of what you’re looking at. It’s easy to find the worst representatives of a group and then declare that the group is garbage based on the few people you choose to hold up for scrutiny!

Oh, and by the way, for every failed leader in the church, there are thousands, if not millions, who go about their days, quietly living out their faith, and serving where they’re called.

The next part is something I have to turn back to you:

You say the Bible is full of contradictions. I’ve studied it for years, but I haven’t found any. Can you share with me the contradictions you know? I’d be curious to see what you think is a contradiction. I’d also like to see the parts that are “silliness or just flat out wrong”.

By the way, if you ever get a chance, be sure to read up on Biblical Archaeology. Some of the interesting stories that people thought the Bible got wrong – but didn't! – include:

Sodom and Gomorrah. We found these cities at the place where the Bible called them. Excavations at the site of Tell el-Hammam have found flourishing cities that were blasted with fire. In fact, a material discovered there resembles Trinitite, which can only be found one other place: ground-zero of a nuclear blast. (Read Genesis 10; 13:10-13; 19 for the full Biblical story.)

The Plagues of Egypt. There is a well-known document called “The Ipuwer Papyrus”, written by an Egyptian official named Ipuwer, which laments catastrophic events that destroyed Egypt. These included: the Nile turning to blood with blood everywhere; fire which burned the land; trees that are destroyed; grain perishing; plagues on cattle; darkness covering the land; and the chosen (firstborn?) children dying. It even mentions that slaves walked out of Egypt carrying the riches of the land as they fled out into the desert. (Read Exodus 7-12 for the whole story.)

David as King. I watched a documentary the other day which said, “David was a mythical figure, certainly not a real person!” Unfortunately the PhD who said this apparently didn't know about the Tell Dan Stele, found in 1993 and 1994, which actually records a battle where a king defeated Jehu of the “House of David”. It actually says, “the house of David” on the engraving. Whoops! Hard to have a “House of David” if David is a mythical person.

Jonah was real. Okay, this is weird! Everyone knows that there is no such city as Nineveh, right? If you lived in about 1820, all of the experts would have told you that Nineveh never existed and that the Bible simply made up the whole thing...until archaeologists found Nineveh, right were the Bible put it! Oh, and it was HUGE and even more beautiful than anyone had imagined. Then, we found in a Babylonian librarian from the 3rd century BC, a Babylonian priest/historian named Berosus wrote of a mythical creature named Oannes who, according to Berosus, emerged from the sea to give divine wisdom to men. (Source: gotquestions.org) In the original language of the Bible, the name “Jonah” would be “Ioannes”. In the Babylonian language, when they were dealing with foreign names, they would usually drop the “I” in front of the name, leaving the name “Oannes”. So you have a Babylonian historian who refers to a guy named Jonah who came up out of the ocean and told people about God. Seems like a pretty good version of the Bible story to me!

Jesus is real. In addition to Biblical sources, there is ample documentation of the life of Jesus; including famous historians like Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, etc. Even if we ONLY had these documents, we would know: Jesus lived during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, he lived a virtuous life, he was acclaimed as a wonder-worker, he had a brother named James, he claimed to be the Messiah, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate on the eve of Passover, darkness and an earthquake occurred when He died, His disciples believed He rose from the dead and were willing to die for this belief, and Christians worshiped Jesus as God. (There's more, but that's probably enough.) In fact, we have more evidence that Jesus lived than Plato!

The Bible is real. We have over 25,000 copies – either full or fragmentary – of the original documents written within 100-200 years of the actual events. (The copies we have of the works

of Plato were written over 600 years after Plato lived.) The interesting thing is that there is very little variation in the texts and most of the “errors” are someone miscopying a word in one text, even though it’s the same in ten others! (In fact, even if you threw out all of these “errors”, it wouldn’t change any major doctrines found in the Bible!)

Luke is an accurate historian. This is a long, long answer and so I won’t go into all of it here. Luke, wanting to tell the true story of the life of Christ, spends his time in research. In his books (Luke and Acts), Luke references stuff casually...and incorrectly! Or so we thought...

- Luke referred to a city as “Lycaonian” instead of “Lystra”. All of the “experts” KNEW Luke used the wrong name...until we found out the proper name for the city WAS Lycaonian!
- Luke called magistrates in Thessalonica “politarchs”, which no one had ANY documentation for...until we found a paved mosaic listing them as politarchs!
- Luke referenced cities that people thought were fictional...until archaeologists found them!
- Luke mentioned people who never existed...until we found coins with their names on them!

And if he was accurate in his descriptions of the world, what does that mean when he describes Jesus? (The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible, Holden & Geisler)

Contrast that with:

- According to science, the “Big Bang” originated from a speck the size of the head of a pin which contained all of the matter and energy that we can see. It’s super-dense, beyond anything we can even imagine. It’s SO dense that time and space don’t exist around it yet! And then, for some reason, it explodes. Um, why? What caused it to override the gravity that had compressed it originally?
- Evolution teaches that you come from rocks and water. Literally. Somehow those two things were able to form a living cell.
- Evolution teaches life constantly changes. But fishermen caught an “extinct” fish called a coelacanth which supposedly died out with the dinosaurs...except it didn’t...and it hasn’t evolved one extra scale in the millions of years that it was alive and kicking!
- Evolution teaches dinosaurs lived way before man. Yet many cultures have depictions of humans and dinosaurs interacting, with many stories of “dragons” being prevalent. How did humans from cultures scattered around the globe all imagine gigantic lizards without seeing them?
- Evolution teaches that dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago. If that’s true, why do we find dinosaurs with intact soft tissue? It doesn’t fit a 65 million year extinction theory, but it DOES fit with a Biblical timeline. (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/dinosaur-shocker-115306469/>)
- Scientists dismiss the idea of a global flood. Except, Geologists – those who study the earth itself – are beginning to throw out the idea of slow, gradual development of land forms and places like the Grand Canyon. Also, it doesn’t take into account how different cultures around the world talk about a global – or, to be fair, a near-global – flood! Even the aborigines living in the desert of Australia’s outback have a global flood story... Kind of quirky!

And that's just a short list of objections I can muster...

"Silliness" and "flat out wrong" can depend on which facts you look at and whose voices you're listening to!

Why is God so perfect?

It's His nature. I'm sorry, I can't explain any more than that. It's like asking, "Why is water so wet?" Because that's the way it is. Please understand that I think this is a great question because you're spending time thinking about God, but this is simply one answer that can't go any deeper! God is just who He is!

Why should we believe in God?

One of the things we need to do when we consider this question is to look at the world around us. There IS a world around us, right? If so, then we need to answer the question: how did it get here? If we consider that, then there are only two options:

God (or "gods")	Scientific Theory
If God created the universe, we find: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It requires God to create it.• It has a definite beginning.• It's created by God's will.• It follows a rational plan.• It's intended for good.• It's beautiful.• It explains how life arose.	If the universe is as science describes, we find: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It "requires" multiple universes.• It may or may not have a beginning.• It came from literally nothing.• It should be chaotic with no rules.• It has no purpose.• It's beauty is only an illusion/perception.• It needs a separate theory on how life arose.

Which one of these is a better fit for what we actually observe? Do we see a logical, rational, mathematically-ordered universe that's beautiful? Or, do we see a universe that's chaotic, self-creating, built from nothing, and that seems to have no purpose? Does it make sense to believe in multiple universes that we cannot see or prove exist, or in a God who claims to have revealed Himself to humans at very specific points in history?

The argument can go on from there...

Is it easier to believe the Bible when it says that God created us and breathed life into us; that we are the creation of a loving Creator? Or, is it easier to believe that the earth formed; water crashed onto earth from somewhere else; that somehow rocks, water, and electricity created amino acids that just happened to form the right sequence to make a protein; that these proteins just happened to make the right sequences to make the structures in a cell; and that all of this happened by pure, random chance?

Both God and science are different ways to try to understand the world we live in. For the most part –

no matter what people may tell you – they are NOT enemies. You don't have to flush your brain to become a Christian; nor do you have to give up on Christ to do science! Where the two have their major differences is in the answer to the question of "how did it get here"? Both require faith, since no one was there to see it happen and we can't recreate it in a laboratory.

So the next question is, where do you put your faith? In humans or in God?

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