



Serving the Truth in a Love Sandwich

Does God Exist?

Of Course God Exists

1st Peter 3:15 "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

This series of courses is about answering difficult questions about Christianity. As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to be prepared to defend our faith. We are *not* going to study what Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists etc. believe. We are going to study the truth, not lies, except for a few of their questions, which often have lies as their basis.

However, as we study, remember God's truth is spread more heart to heart than mind to mind. Since we have minds they must also be included in the communication, but never forget to serve the truth in a love sandwich.

This course looks at a few of the philosophical arguments for the existence of God. We sort them into four categories just for simplicity. An actual philosopher would probably cringe at this, but we are just trying to get a general understanding, not an in depth knowledge of this ancient and complex issue.

Lesson 1 – Primary Cause (Cosmological)

Lesson 2 – Argument from Design (Teleological)

Lesson 3 – Argument from Desire (Ontological)

Lesson 4 – Argument from Observation (Common Sense)

Please do not decide that any of them are wrong without researching the complete argument from other sources. In each case, I have tried to present it in an easy to understand way. But the subject matter keeps this from being totally possible. Focus on what you do understand, and ignore what you do not. Some of these ideas took very smart people a long time to think up. Sometimes it takes these ideas a while to sink in. Be patient with yourself. Also, do not worry about the fancy theological titles; I just add those for your reference in case you want to research further. Only one of these arguments needs to be valid in order for belief in God to be reasonable.

Suggested methodology for each lesson:

1. Fellowship (Save most of this for the end of class.)
2. Take prayer requests (Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst.)
3. Pray (The idea here is to leave our troubles with God so we can give His word our attention with a clear mind.)
4. Read the lesson's text aloud from the Bible. (... or a few verses at a time as you answer the questions.)
5. Answer and *briefly* discuss the "fill in the blank" questions. (Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers on the next page are just one opinion; you may have a better answer if it is based on Scripture.)
6. On the final "Think & Pray" question everyone should take a few minutes to pray over it and jot down their own thoughts before the discussion. **This will give the Holy Spirit a time to speak.**
7. Discuss your "Think & Pray" answers. (Never force anyone to share theirs. As with the other questions, my answer is just one more opinion; you may have a better answer.)
8. Close in prayer (It is best to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission ahead of time.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, each lesson is expected to take about one hour. Steps 4 thru 7 are about half of that. If you take longer, let each lesson take more than one meeting, or consider breaking into two groups. The final "Think & Pray" question should always be covered, because that is when everyone takes a quiet moment to listen to the Teacher, the Holy Spirit. If you take less time, extra questions are provided for discussion called "For Further Thought"

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Additional Reading

These lessons are designed for small groups or individuals to use without reference to other materials besides the Bible. However, a lot more could be gained if those involved would do some additional reading between class meetings. (See <http://lovebiblestudy.com/CC/Library.htm>)

We plan to provide specific recommendations with each course at <http://lovebiblestudy.com/TLS/Adjunct/> We also hope to be making specific chapter recommendations from various Christian books that have helped us in our understanding of apologetics, but are not entirely about the topic of the course. Such as these books which would make good companions for this entire series of courses.

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek

The Case for ... series of books by Lee Strobel

Cold Case Christianity, God's Crime Scene, and Forensic Faith – 3 books by J. Warner Wallace

Also, some books do dovetail nicely with particular courses. This book would work very well with this course, God Exists:

God's Not Dead: Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty by Rice Broocks

Lesson 1 – Primary Cause

[1A] Read Psalm 19:1 If we look up at the sky where the sun, planets and stars are in motion whose work do we see? _____

[1B] Read Genesis 1:1 Who caused the heavens and the earth? _____

[1C] Read John 1:1-3. Who was present with God in the beginning? _____

This argument for the existence of God can take several different forms. God exists because something had to be the first thing to move – God is that first thing, God is the prime mover. God is the uncaused first cause so if there were no God, nothing would exist.

[1D] What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments?

Think & Pray _____

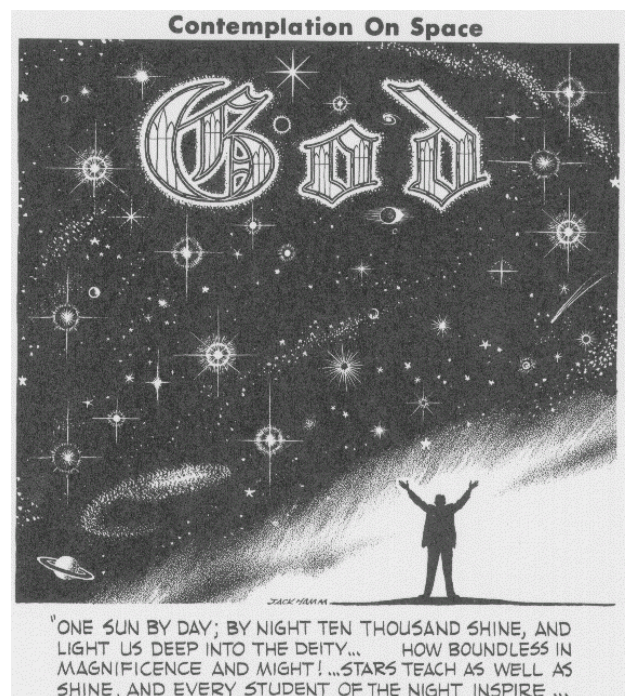
For further thought:

(1e) When asked where the universe came from if God didn't make it, an atheist said to me, "The cosmological arguments are no help. You would still be left with the task of explaining where God came from. Rather than answering the question, it only brings it back one step and leaves it at that. The cosmological arguments are not an explanation, but an evasion of the problem. No one knows for sure how the universe started, and these arguments make no sense." How would you answer this?

(1f) How does 2 Chronicles 2:6 help with this argument?

(1g) Does 1st Chronicles 16:26 help with this argument?

(1h) What does Genesis 22:33 add to the argument?



----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 1 – Primary Cause – Term for further research: Cosmological

[1A] Read Psalm 19:1 (firmament or expanse both mean sky) If we look up at the sky where the sun, moon, planets and stars are in motion whose work do we see? God's

[1B] Read Genesis 1:1 Who caused the heavens and the earth? God

[1C] Read John 1:1-3. Who was present with God in the beginning? the Word (i.e. Jesus - see John 1:14)

[1D] We know that things do not move unless something starts them to moving. Once in motion they gradually slow down and eventually stop. Since there are some things in the universe moving, something had to start them in motion, and since they are still moving it must have happened at some particular moment in time. That first mover is God, and that moment in time is creation. However, simply labeling this prime mover God does not assure that this prime mover is intelligent or had a purpose.

Everything we know about happens because something caused it to happen, so there must have been some original cause where it all started. That original cause is God. Same weakness as above. Does not speak to intelligence or purpose.

Everything that we know exists could also not exist. Since they do exist instead of not existing there must be some reason for their existence. That reason is God. Sure, but if somebody says, "I disagree," what do say then?

My further thoughts:

(1e) I answered with sarcasm but what I wish I had said was something like this:

"Perhaps if I explained it a little better? Cosmological proof usually rests on two laws of logic: the law of causality and the law of sufficient reason. The first demands the recognition of the first cause of the world, and the second affirms that nothing but the highest universal Cause can be recognized on a sufficient basis as the true first cause of the world. Everything in the world has a cause and is the consequence of another cause. This means that everything in the world has the cause of its existence outside of itself; nothing is self-existing. Therefore, the world, too, in totality, is not self-existing and must have a cause for its existence, and this cause must be outside of this world. Such a cause can be only a universally all-highest Being: God. Does that make better sense to you?"

(1f) 2 Chron 2:6 makes it clear that God exists outside the universe. This is logically required in order for Him to be the cause of the universe. It would not makes sense for something to cause itself.

(1g) Like Ps 19:1 above, it simply confirms one more time that God is the Creator.

(1h) Like 2 Chronicles above it logically necessary for God to exist before the universe in time, if He is the cause of it.

Lesson 2 – Argument from Design

[2A] Read Jeremiah 31:33-34. Where does God put His law? _____

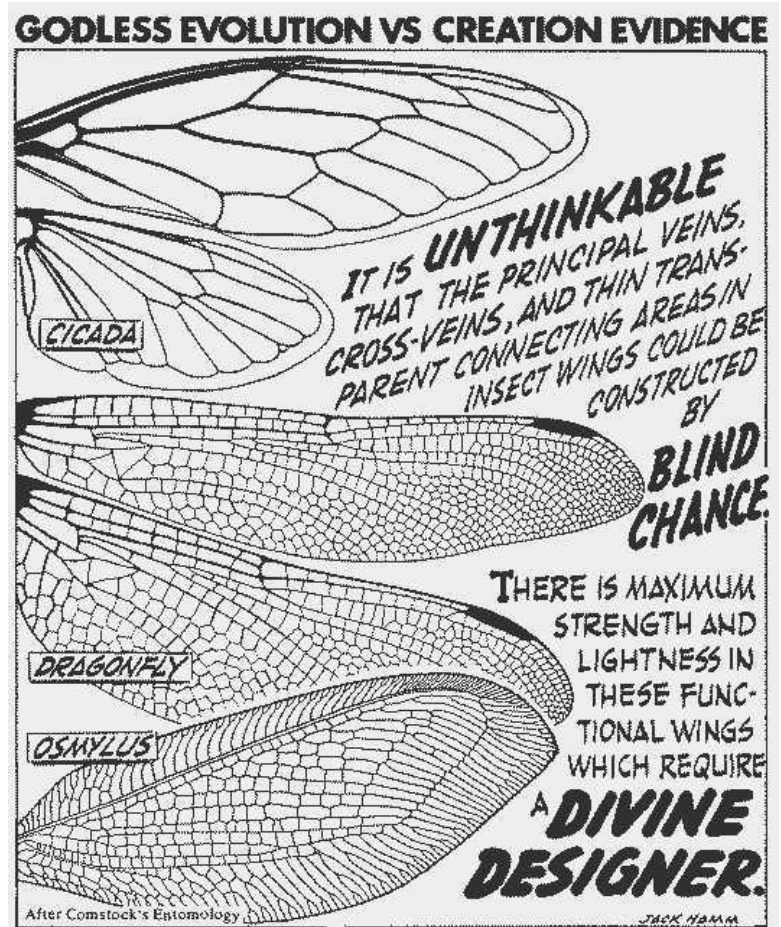
[2B] Read Romans 1:19-20. What makes God's nature clear? _____

[2C] Read Psalm 96:4-6 In verse 4 what does it say the Lord is? _____

Design demands there must be a Designer. For instance, there is law, so there must be a lawgiver. God exists because people know there is a difference between right and wrong. There can be no law unless there is a lawgiver. Without God to make us aware of good and evil all we would have is what we like and what we do not like.

[2D] What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments?

Think & Pray



For further thought:

(2e) When asked where the idea of morals came from if not from God, an atheist said to me, "The requirements of our survival as a group of thinking individuals gave rise to moral law, all with different and conflicting interests, moved us to make increasingly more complicated agreements (from taboos, to decalogues, to codes, to decrees, to constitutions) so we don't bash each other's head over what to have for dinner." How would you respond to this atheist?

(2f) A related argument for God is this one: There is a good, better and best to everything. There must be something that is better than everything else. That "best" is God. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this argument.

(2g) What clarity might Ezk 11:19, Heb 8:11, Ps 37:31, and Ps 40:8 bring to this issue?

Lesson 2 – Argument from Design – Term for further research: Teleological

[2A] Read Jeremiah 31:33-34. Where does God put His law? Within us in our heart

[2B] Read Romans 1:19-20. What makes God's nature clear? the things that are made

[2C] Read Psalm 96:4-6 In verse 4 what does it say the Lord is? great

[2D] The argument from design (Sometimes called Paley's Watchmaker Argument or The Teleological Argument William Paley (1743-1805) was a British philosopher-theologian. He tells the story of someone finding a watch. When he does he knows it was designed. The same is true of the universe. It does not look like an accident, it looks like it was designed. That puts the burden of proof on those that say it was an accident to prove that it is. They cannot prove it is an accident because it was designed on purpose.

The lawgiver argument has been around for centuries and is based on something Immanuel Kant, (1724-1804), called the "Moral Law Within." Perhaps the best explanation of it was by C. S. Lewis in his book Mere Christianity. (1955) Lewis explains at some length that there is something inside us that judges between our instincts based on ethical and moral grounds. This unique quality in us logically requires the existence of a moral architect and designer. This argument is often called Lewis's Ethical Choices argument.

My further thoughts:

(2e) My actual response: "You offered a theory explaining the development of morals over time. That was not the question. The question was where did the idea there is such a thing as morals originate?"

A better response might have been: "That is an excellent explanation of how morals and laws have developed over time in various cultures. However, I was talking about the origin or creation of the idea that there is a common rule of morals that applies to everyone. Even four year old children complain when they perceive things are unfair. We seem to be born with the idea already in our head. It is easy to see moral law solves a difficult problem for us because it is above everyone; no one is not under the authority of it. However, as soon as you say it is simply a matter of convention, it loses its authority, and its usefulness. I am very interested in what you think about this issue."

(2f) God is best, but this same argument can be used of other qualities. Some things are stronger than others so there must be something in the universe that is strongest, (i.e. God). Some things are more beautiful than others so something has to be the most beautiful, (i.e. God) This is perhaps the weakest argument here since it is possible for one thing to be the strongest and something else to be the most beautiful. I include it here only because historically it was widely used. (Sometimes called the Teleological Argument from Comparison) A better related argument is the esthetical argument that the presence of beauty and sublimity in the universe and the response of man to such beauty, could not possibly have both happened by accident.

(2g) These verses make it clear that God puts His laws inside of us. Our conscience is no accident.

Lesson 3 – Argument from Desire

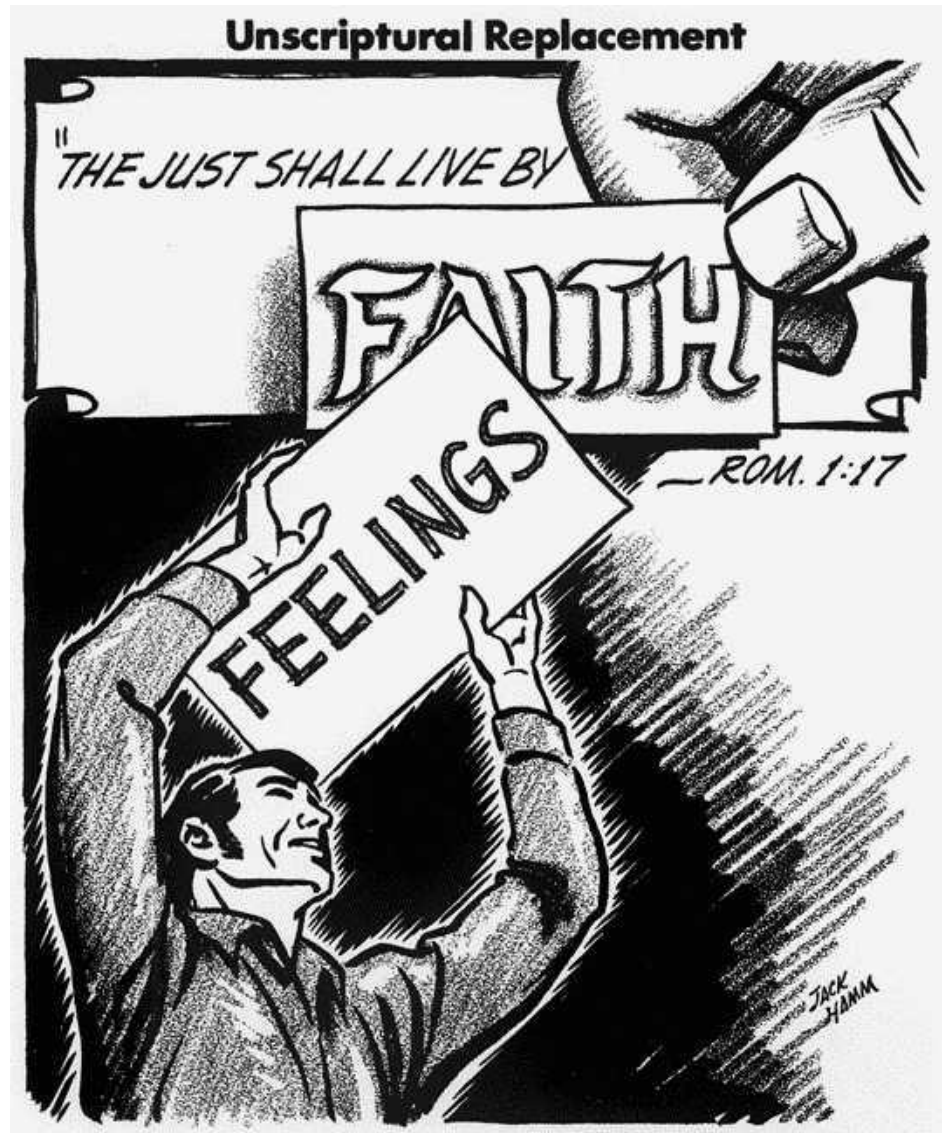
[3A] Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. What should a man boast about? _____

(See also 2nd Corinthians 10:17)

[3B] God exists because it is unthinkable that he does not exist. We thirst and there is water. We hunger and there is food. We desire meaning in life and there is God. How could a desire come into existence for which there is nothing to fulfill it?

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this argument?

Think & Pray



For further thought:

(3c) An atheist responded to this by saying "A god does not add meaning to life. An eternity spent singing psalms in heaven is the most meaningless future I can imagine. The argument from desires is absurd. Human life is filled with desires with no viable satisfaction?"

How would you respond to this atheist?

(3d) Another atheist attacked in this way: "Christianity is just one false myth among many. Mithra was a Persian sun god. He belonged to an ancient and widespread collection of sun gods (along with Horus, Dionysus, Krishna, Tammuz, Serapis and Jesus) who all shared common mythical features: they were born on December 25th from a virgin mother, preached compassion, healed the sick, died and resurrected, and saved the world. Mithra is the main figure from which the Jesus myth was built."

Lesson 3 – Argument from Desire – Term for further research: Ontological

[3A] Jeremiah 9:23-24. What should a man boast about? that he understands and knows God

[3B] Another form of this argument is called Anselm's Ontological Argument. (Ontological means "systematic study of being or existing.") Archbishop Anselm (AD 1033-1109) was a brilliant teacher and defender of the Christian faith. He was archbishop of Canterbury, England. His Ontological Argument for the existence of God is briefly outlined here. This unique argument has been debated for centuries among many great philosophers.

- A) God is defined as the being of which none greater is possible.
- B) The notion of God exists in the understanding of your mind.
- C) That God may exist must at least be accepted as a possibility.
- D) If God only exists in the mind, and yet may have existed, then God might have been greater than He is.
- E) If (D) is true, God might have been greater than He actually is in reality.
- F) Therefore if (D) and (E) are true, God is a being which a greater is possible.
- G) F is not possible (since it violates Aristotle's non-contradiction) because (A) is the definition of God.
- H) Therefore God exists in reality as well as the mind.

My further thoughts:

(3c) My actual answer: The Atheist asserts my argument is absurd but offers no evidence that it is. He asserts a god does not add meaning to life, when I know from personal experience that He does. My life was so difficult I was in a suicidal depression until I gave my life to Jesus Christ. Decades later my life is even more difficult and I rejoice in the Lord. I have never suggested that eternity will be spent singing psalms in heaven, but he insists on inviting his straw men to every discussion we have. He asserts that "human life is filled with desires with no viable satisfaction," but he offers not a single example of one. Has anyone ever heard a story like this one? 'I was a drifting drunk and drug addict. I lost every loving relationship I had in my life. Then I became an atheist and it turned my life around.' No, they have not, because it does not happen. Atheism is useless.

How could I have wrapped this truth in a love sandwich?

(3d) My actual response: "Since I think there is 1 chance in 365.25 that Jesus was born on Dec 25th that point is lost on me. Besides all these 'deities' do not share all these things in common. I can not imagine where you got your information. However, let's suppose that what you say is true, and all these entities do share these seven things in common. It's really not a very long list, is it? If you were to list the differences wouldn't it be a much longer list? You are like those people that are impressed by the lists of common things between John Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln. Those lists are longer than seven by far, and still not convincing. If you pick out any two people on earth at random, and if you have sufficient information about them, you can compile a pretty impressive list of similarities. This is a statistical fact. It would be pretty surprising if you couldn't do the same thing with so called deities.

"Even if there were significant similarities it still would be meaningless. We know that $3 \times 4 = 12$. If someone else came up with the answer 21, that would not make both answers wrong just because they both have the digits 1 and 2. 12 would still be the right answer no matter how many similar wrong answers you came up with. There is no truth that does not have lies that are similar to it. It is not the similarities that matter, it is the differences. Mithra was the god of the sun; Jesus is the Lord of everything. Mithra shared his deity with others in his pantheon; God shares His deity with no one. Our Lord is the only one founded in historical truth. God has intervened several times in human history. Mithra has never appeared in our history."

This might have been a better approach: (from GotQuestions.org) The New Testament attests to the fact that the portrayal of Jesus was not mistaken for that of any other god. When faced with Paul's teaching, the elite thinkers of Athens said this: "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean" (Acts 17:18-20). Clearly, if the accounts of Jesus were simply rehashing stories of other gods, the Athenians would not have referred to them as "new" teaching. If dying and rising gods were plentiful in the first century why, when the apostle Paul preached Jesus rising from the dead in Acts 17, did the Epicureans and Stoics not remark, "Ah, just like Horus and Mithras"?

Lesson 4 – Argument from Observation

[4A] Read Isaiah 11:9. What will fill the earth? _____

[4B] Read Psalm 139:7-14. What knows that God's works are marvellous or wonderful? _____

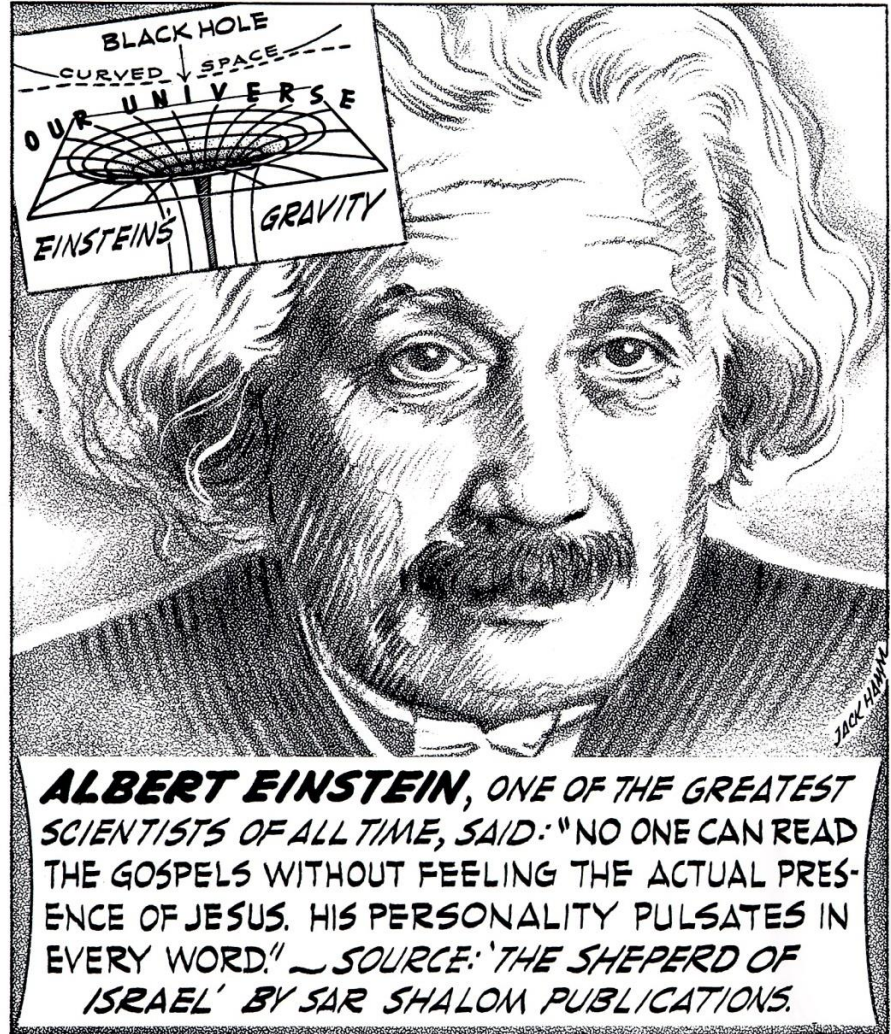
[4C] Read Hebrews 11:6. What must we believe in order to please Him? _____

[4D] We know God exists because he answers prayer.

A THINKER'S REACTION

We can interact with Him. The existence of God is intuitively obvious to the most casual observer.

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments?
Think & Pray



For further thought:

- (4e) Where does the Bible argue for the existence of God?
- (4f) If an atheist asked you why you believe in God, how would you answer?
- (4g) What prayers has God answered for you lately?
- (4h) I tried asking some atheists this question: "Why is there almost universal belief in the spiritual world?" One answered "Touché. Consider this one: Why are spiritual beliefs currently disappearing in the more civilized societies?" How would you respond to this atheist?
- (4i) Here are some scriptures that might add to your discussion:
Romans 1:19-21, Heb 8:11, Jeremiah 24:7, and Habakkuk 2:14

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 4 – Argument from Observation – (For further research look around you carefully)

[4A] Read Isaiah 11:9. What will fill the earth? knowledge of the Lord

[4B] Read Psalm 139:7-14. What knows that God's works are marvellous or wonderful. the soul

[4C] Read Hebrews 11:6. What must we believe in order to please Him? that He is or that He exists

[4D] We know God exists by direct experience. We can know that God exists the same way we know that each other exist. When you talk to me I'll usually answer you unless I do not hear you or something. God does the same thing. Try Him. Just remember if He answers your requests with, "No" it proves His existence just as much as, "Yes."

We know God exists by direct observation. What is being said here is that everyone knows that God exists. They simply bury their heads in the sand like an ostrich hoping to escape accountability before their maker.

This argument was expressed well by Augustine over 1500 years ago. Considered to be one of the most outstanding theologians in the history of the Christian Church, Augustine was born in North Africa in 354 A.D. and died there in 430. He is known as Augustine of Hippo. Other theologians have added to it, and restated it since that time.

My further thoughts:

(4e) I have never found a place where the Bible argues for the existence of God. It just assumes He does and starts from there. This makes sense to me. It is like someone refusing to acknowledge my existence unless I produce a birth certificate. Believing God does not exist is just silly, like it says Psalm 53:1, "the fool thinks there is no God." (I don't recommend mentioning this to atheists.)

(4f) We have presented a lot of reasons that theologians and philosophers give that God exists. It gives me confidence to know these very reasonable arguments exist, but I do not try to use them all when talking to atheists. I usually talk about my personal relationship with Him and answered prayer, because I understand these the best. If I use argument at all, I use a combination of the cosmological and teleological arguments, because I do not fully see the difference in these. The others I do not understand well enough to use, and I'm afraid if I try, I'll just give an unbeliever an excuse not to believe in God. All Christians should understand that God exists and that He answers prayer.

(4g) God is good

(4h) My response: "I am not aware of spiritual beliefs disappearing in the more civilized societies. I am not really sure what you mean by 'civilized.' In the USA and Western Europe Christianity is losing ground to Moslems, Hindus, and a variety of pagan cults. In China, Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, and most of the so-called third world, Christianity is on the rise. The Moslem countries are remaining solidly Moslem, although you could make a case for a rise in secularism there. What are you talking about?" He never responded.

(4i) I believe people who deny the existence of God are determined to not see the obvious.