

Existence of God



RCIA Handouts:

1. "How Do I Know God Exists?"

2. "Life's Answers"

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HOW DO I KNOW GOD EXISTS?

Part I

We know God exists through the things He has made. “Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God’s eternal power and divinity have become visible, recognized through the things He has made.” (Rom. 1:20) Often the reason people reject God’s existence is not based on logic, but on emotion. They do not want to believe in God because this would mean they have to keep His commandments. St. Augustine says: “He who denies the existence of God, has some reason for wishing that God did not exist.” Natural revelation is the knowledge of God we learn through nature and reason. We can know God exists through reason; not directly, but indirectly – through God’s creation. The scripture says: “From the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen.” (Wis. 13:1-9) A hunter in the forest was once asked how he knew there is a God. He said, “In the same way I know by footprints on the forest floor that a bear or deer has passed by, so too I see from the marks on the world the fingerprints of God.” If there was a Big Bang, who caused it? Every cause has an effect, and there cannot be a limitless number of limited causes. Ultimately there must be an uncaused cause. If we have a line of dominoes and they fall down, something must have moved the first one. God is the uncaused cause, the unmoved mover. Here is a poem I wrote in the seminary that reflects God’s image in creation.

THE PARABLE OF NATURE

I see His eyes in the stars, and His face in the flower.
I behold His beauty in the sunset, and His golden hair in the wheat of the field.
I hear the Almighty’s voice in the thunder, and sense His anger in the storm.
Observe the Lord’s tears in the rain, and share His cheer in the sunshower.
Envision His arm in the lightning, and His finger in the eclipse. One can feel His
breath in the wind, and His sweat in the ocean spray.
Notice His shoulders in the hills, His footprints in the valleys. We understand His
depth in the ocean, and heights of divinity in the heavens.
I touch His solidity in the firmness of the rocks.
I can taste divine sweetness in the fruit of the tree and vine.
I smell the aroma in the flowers and the pines.
In the clouds we picture the heavenly clothing and the supreme colors in autumn
leaves.
I behold the Lord’s throne in the mountains and His staff in the trees.
I see the Heavenly Father’s robe in the northern lights, and His belt in the
rainbow.
One can recognize divine purity in the sparkling ice, and the riches of divinity in
the earth’s minerals.

Consider the stillness of the almighty in the eye of a hurricane, or His majestic speed in the tornado.

Men encounter His moods in the seasons, and His mystery in the light of the moon.

I detect the passing of the Lord's spirit in the twilight, and the coming of His justice with the dawn.

I discern the secrets of the Lord's salvation in the seed, which dies to become new life.

Nature is but a parable, and creation is a great teacher of God.

The universe is a visible witness to His invisible reality.

Men know God's wisdom by the order of creation, and I know

God's love because He shares His beauty with His image – man.

HOW DO I KNOW GOD EXISTS?

Part II

Argument from Design: A Catholic and an atheist worked together at a car factory. The Catholic said: "Isn't it great that our new car came together by accident?" The atheist protested, "What do you mean, accident? There are many years of research, design, computers and craftsmanship built into that car." The Catholic said: "Then by what logic do you conclude that the universe, which is much more advanced, is an accident?" The Intelligence of the design points to the intelligence of the designer – namely God. (Theological Argument)

Argument from Dependency: Everything that exists must have either come from itself, or from something else. Since all things we see in nature are not self-causing beings, there must ultimately be a Being which depends only upon itself. (Cosmological Argument)

Argument from Conscience: Everyone who uses reason recognizes there is a universal moral law. It is good to do some things, such as feed the poor, and bad to do others, such as kill the innocent. This moral law we recognize but did not create. It points to a Creator of moral law, known as the Law-giver.

There was a man who was an atheist, and his main reason against God's existence was that the world was so cruel and unjust. But, he later realized that his sense of justice was based on a universal principle. If he recognized a wrong, then there must be a right. If he argued that all reality was senseless, he had to admit one part, his moral ideal, was sensible. Why then did this one part, his sense of justice, make sense, but the rest of the world didn't? If life had no meaning, then he would never have discovered it. We can only recognize darkness because we know light. (Moral Argument)

Pascal's Wager: This is the gambler's argument for God. If there were only two lottery tickets left, one of which was a certain winner, and you had the option to buy one, would it be a wise investment to spend one dollar to win a million with 50-50 odds? Isn't it better to risk losing a dollar? We are all committed to place a bet on whether God exists or not. If we choose not to believe in God, then we place our bet on lesser odds. If God does not exist, we will never know we made a mistake. If God does exist, and we act against Him, then we lose eternal happiness. Whatever we have to give up for our belief in God, we know to be a temporary thing anyway. We will lose these things forever either way. However, if we gamble our life on God's non-existence and He does turn out to exist, we have given up an eternal thing and lost Heaven forever. The safer bet is on God's existence, the odds are in favor of God. Isn't it better to risk losing a dollar (some of this world's pleasures) for the chance to win a million (Eternal Paradise)? (Pragmatic Argument)

The Purpose of Life Argument: Life does not have a sufficient purpose worthy of the dignity of man except with God. Only with God's existence does life make sense. Without God life is absurd and has no sufficient purpose or meaning. This is why suicides abound among those who reject God; it is only in the deep purpose of God that man can find the true and adequate reason to live. (Existentialist Argument)

Fr. Burke

Life's Answers

To Daniel the King said, "Truly your God is the God of gods and Lord of Kings and a revealer of mysteries; that is why you were able to reveal this mystery."
-From the Book of the Prophet Daniel 2:47

What is the Purpose of Life?

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given you besides." (Mt. 6:33) "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you; only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic. 6:8) Perfect happiness can only be found in perfect life, love, and truth, which is God. It does not consist in temporary and imperfect, material possessions (Lk. 12:15), sensual pleasures (Ec. 1:8), and human friendships, but only in perfect and eternal friendship with God. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consumes, and thieves break in and steal; lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves break in." (Mt. 6:19-20) We were made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) and only God can fill our hearts. St. Augustine: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord."

How do I know God exists?

"From the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen." (Wis. 13:1-9) "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen-His everlasting power also and divinity- being understood through the things that are made." (Rom. 1:20)

Why does God allow evil?

1. **To test us** We can't know the full answer because then there would be no need for faith or trust in God. God allows us examples of how He has drawn good out of evil in the past, in other situations, that we may trust him in the future in our situation. "Those who trust in Him shall understand truth." (Wis. 3:9) "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job. 1:21) "We accept good things from God; and should we not accept evil?" (Job. 2:10) Also read: Job. 1, 2, 38-42, 1 Pt. 4:12-18.
2. **To preserve free will** "When God, in the beginning, created man, He made him subject to his own free choice. If you choose you can keep the commandments; ... Before man are life and death, whichever He chooses shall be given him." (Sir. 15:14-17) "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. For what a man sows, that he will also reap." (Gal. 6:7,8)

3. **To draw good out of evil** “You intended evil against me, but God intended it for good, to do as He has done today, namely, to save the lives of many people.” (Gen. 50:20) “As I live, says the Lord God, I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man’s conversion, that he may live.” (Ezek. 33:11) “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Lk. 19:10) “I came to call sinners, not the just.” (Mk. 2:17)
4. **Through the great evil of the crucifixion – the murder of the sinless Son of God, He brought about the great good of redemption – salvation for the world:** “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into His glory?” (Lk. 24:26) “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” (Jn. 3:16) “Through His suffering, my servant shall justify many ... He shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses.” (Is. 53:11,12)
5. **To conquer evil** “Overcome evil with good.” (Rom. 12:21)
6. **To give us a means to a greater reward** “He who overcomes, I will permit him to sit with Me upon My throne; as I also have overcome and have sat with my Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:21, Job. 42:10, 12)
7. **Why do we allow evil?** We may well wonder how we would answer this question if God asked it of us. What would we say if God asked, “Why does man allow evil? Why does he continue to kill and steal when he knows better?”

Why pray to God?

“Those who trust in You cannot be put to shame.” (Dan. 3:40) “The unceasing prayer of a just man is of great avail.” (Jam. 5:16)

How can we experience God?

By opening our hearts and asking Him to come into our soul and our life –
 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man listens to My voice and opens the door to Me, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.” (Rev. 3:20) “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (Jam. 4:8) “If you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Lk. 11:13)

Who is God?

God is our Father (Is. 64:7), God is our Friend (Jn. 15:15), God is our Creator (Gen. 1:1), God is our Savior (Lk. 1:47), God is our Comforter (Jn. 14:26), God is all Powerful (Lk. 1:37), God is all Knowing (1 Sam. 2:3), God is Eternal (Ps. 90:2,4), God is all Good (Ps. 136:1), God is Just (Ps. 119:37), God is Light (1 Jn. 1:5).

Who is Jesus Christ?

He is “the Son of God.” (Mt. 4:3) He is “the Savior of the world.” (Jn. 4:42) He is: “The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (Jn. 1:29) Of Himself He says: “I am the resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, even if he die, shall live.” (Jn. 11:25) “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” (Rev. 21:6) “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.” (Jn. 14:6)

What is the Gospel?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” (Jn. 3:16)
“Through His suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt He shall bear.” (Is. 53:11) “I am not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (Rom. 1:16) “Now I recall to your minds, the gospel that I preached to you, through which also you are being saved, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas. Then He was seen by more than five hundred at one time, last of all He was seen also by me.” (1 Cor. 15:1-6)

What Major Old Testament Prophecies did Jesus Fulfill?

Born of a Virgin, “Behold a virgin shall conceive.” (Is. 7:14, Mt. 1:18-25) Born at Bethlehem “Bethlehem from you shall come one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from ancient times.” (Mic. 5:2) He is crucified, “They have pierced My hands and My feet.” (Ps. 22:16, Lk. 23:33) He rose on the third day, “on the third day He will raise us up, to live in His presence.” (Hos. 6:2)

What is the Cross?

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Lk. 9:23) “The doctrine of the cross is foolishness to those who perish, but to those who are saved, it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18) The cross is the condition of Christ’s discipleship.

What is The Last Judgment?

“And I saw a great white throne and the one who sat upon it; from His face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. And another scroll was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the scrolls, according to their works ... And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the pool of fire.” (Rev. 20:11-13)

What is Heaven?

“Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many; enter into the joy of your master.” (Mt. 25:21)
“And he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘This day you shall be with Me in paradise.’” (Lk. 23:42, 43)
“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold the dwelling of God with men ... And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.’” (Rev. 21:3,4)

(Written by Rev. H.T. Burke)