



How Do I Know God Exists?

8

Key Themes

- God is the only eternal being.
- God's existence makes sense of the entire universe.

Key Passages

- Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:13–15; Romans 1:20–21

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain three reasons, from Scripture and the realm of experience, for the existence of the biblical God.
- Recognize that God exists outside of time and that He is the Creator of everything, including time.
- Contrast the presuppositional and evidential approaches of confirming the existence of God.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

As students arrive, provide slips of paper to mark Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:13–15; Romans 1:20–21. Write on the board, “How do we prove God exists?”



Studying God's Word

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Since the Bible presupposes the existence of God, the writers did not seek to prove His existence. A universe without the biblical God is impossible.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- (Optional) Consider playing the audio clip “Where Did God Come From?” from the Resource DVD-ROM.



Activity: Big Bang—Sense or Nonsense?

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Students will cause their own “big bang” with LEGO® bricks, puzzle pieces, or model pieces to see if something orderly can come from a big bang.

- Bring in some LEGO® bricks, a jigsaw puzzle, and/or model pieces.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

As you prepare to approach this very important lesson, read and reflect on the following Scriptures: Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:13–15; Romans 1:18–21; Psalm 19:1–6.

“How do I know God exists?” This is a question that has been and will be debated as long as sinners occupy the earth. First of all, as Christians who walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), we do not need to prove the existence of God. The Bible says that we accept God by faith—that we *believe* that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Because the Bible is our basis for all we believe, we believe in God as presented in the Bible.

God’s Word begins with the proclamation that He and He alone existed from eternity past: “In the beginning God . . .” (Genesis 1:1). If He had wanted to prove Himself to the world in a way our minds could grasp, He could have done that. God saw no need to explain further. Belief in Him as the one true God comes by faith and trust in Him and His Word.

Genesis 1 continues to describe this God who spoke the entire universe into existence. The order we see in creation—from the stars, solar systems, animal and plant life, to the natural laws of gravity, motion, and thermodynamics—gives evidence of an omnipotent Creator. There is no other explanation. The universe is not a result of random chance. It was created by one who was not created. There had to be someone who never came into being. There had to be a Creator. God—the one true God—is that Creator, who was and is and is to come (Revelation 4:8).

As we look to the Scriptures, we see that God described Himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM,” which essentially means: *the one who is and will be* (Exodus 3:13–14). The eternal, self-existent nature of God is revealed through His Word and simply assumed. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, again, John records that the Lord is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8). What more do we need? This describes the only, holy, omnipotent, omniscient God of the universe—who was and is and always will be. He is not bound by time as we know it. He created time in the beginning (Genesis 1:1).

God in His mercy has also specifically revealed Himself through His incredible creation. “The heavens

declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). And the Apostle Paul tells us that since the creation of the world, God’s invisible attributes have been seen through creation, revealing His eternal power and Godhead—leaving those who do not believe in Him without excuse (Romans 1:18–21). God does indeed exist. His existence is confirmed in Scripture and through His creation—and the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven against all who suppress the truth of His existence in unrighteousness.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Look around you; what do you see? An amazingly designed universe—from the single cell to the vast and immeasurable solar system. And yet the debate for a Creator of such things rages. We can rest in God’s Word, “In the beginning God . . .” (Genesis 1:1). We know that if something exists, it was somehow created into being. And as Christians we know who that Creator was. But what of folks who state there was no Creator—it all began with a bang, a very “big bang,” one that allegedly occurred billions of years ago in one tiny speck of mass and energy, a speck that would one day become everything we see today?

This story of the big bang originated with an attempt to completely discount the Bible and its account of our Creator God. Christians who buy into it need to understand the atheistic beginnings of this secular story and why it cannot be “added” to the biblical account of Genesis 1 without destroying the Bible’s integrity.

From a practical standpoint, have you ever blown something up and then observed the pieces re-assembling into a complex . . . anything? No, when buildings are demolished they pretty much end up in a heap of debris with no order or design. And yet, the big bang proposed by some has produced intricate life and more. In fact, this notion claims that out of a random explosion and expansion of matter billions of years ago, life in its complexity and beauty— from the human body to the ant, from the wonder of the solar system to the universe beyond—has been organized and arranged into the complex world we live in today by nothing more than random, natural processes.

But, we know that the very existence of design, order, natural laws, and principles in the universe demands that there was a Creator—an Organizer, a

Designer—not a big bang. That Creator can only be the one true Creator God. The only one who has declared Himself the Creator (Genesis 1), and the only one who proclaims that He Himself is sustaining the universe—personally maintaining life and upholding all things by the word of His power (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). This Creator, our God, is truly worthy to receive glory and honor and power—for He created all things, and by His will they exist and were created (Revelation 4:11)!

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The serpent asked, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). And when Adam and Eve succumbed to this deception, that’s when sin, deceit, pride, evil, hatred, death, and suffering entered the world. From the very beginning, people have wanted to be their own gods—and Satan is the primary encourager of this. The God of the Bible demands obedience, reverence, and accountability. God will one day judge the world in righteousness (Psalm 96:13).

Those who believe God’s Word know this to be true—we believe God exists. However, many doubt the very existence of God. These atheists boldly turn from the greatest commandment—“You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3)—to pursue the imaginings of their own minds. Our culture has been shaped by these people who claim there is no God. We’ll look at a few of them here.

Charles Darwin, the father of evolution, although not a proclaimed atheist, was influenced immensely by his atheist grandfather Erasmus. Darwin’s idea of evolution has changed the course of human history and is one of the greatest attacks on the Word of God in our modern time.

Karl Marx, referred to by some as the greatest thinker in all of history, once stated that religion is the opiate of the masses—impotence of the human mind to deal with occurrences it cannot understand.

Sigmund Freud, considered by some as psychology’s most famous figure, believed that religion was nothing more than an expression of underlying psychological neuroses and distress.

More recently, Madalyn Murray O’Hair was instrumental in removing prayer from the public schools in 1963. She believed that religion has caused more

misery to all of mankind in every stage of human history than any other single idea.

And today we have those who are referred to as the “new atheists”—men such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris—and they are aggressively going after your children, your liberties, and your faith! Dawkins, a scientist and an active leader in this movement, believes that one of the things wrong with religion is that it teaches us to be satisfied with answers which are not answers at all. These men and others have accused Christians of “child abuse” for teaching their children the Bible and passing on their faith.

The worldview of these atheists is dangerous to our culture. However, as Christians we are confident in the promises of the Word of God. We must not lose heart. We must be committed to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and enthused about keeping God on His throne as Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all (Colossians 1:17). God has assured us that His Word is settled forever and His faithfulness will endure to all generations (Psalm 119:89–90).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear God, I cannot begin to convey the message of this lesson without your help. How do I know you exist? It is by faith alone that you have opened my eyes to see and my ears to hear the truth, power, beauty, and wonder of who you are. Your creation screams out for all to notice that you are the omnipotent one—but without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we cannot begin to comprehend any of it. Lord, give me wisdom as I try to convey to these precious students that you truly do exist. Open their eyes to your truth—just as you have opened mine. Help them to walk by faith in who you are and not by sight. Allow them to see you clearly—and to one day grasp the love and grace you poured out through the gospel of our Redeemer Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, for this amazing privilege.

Review

- ? **What is apologetics?** *Apologetics is a reasoned defense of the gospel.*
- ? **What is the difference between evidential apologetics and presuppositional apologetics?** *Evidential apologetics focuses on using evidences from outside the Bible to try to prove the Bible*

is true. Presuppositional apologetics starts with the assumption that the Bible is true, proclaims truth from the Bible, and then answers the questions that arise from there.

- ? **Which apologetics method does the Bible teach?** *The Bible always presumes its own truth, so it teaches presuppositional apologetics.*



➤ As students arrive, provide slips of paper to mark Genesis 1, Exodus 3, and Romans 1.

➤ Write on the board, "How do we prove God exists?"



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Let's read Genesis 1:1 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us. Remember that we want to make sure that we draw principles out of the Bible, not bring our own ideas into our understanding of the text.

Observe the Text

- ? **Who are the persons in this passage?** *God.*
- ? **What are the action words (key verbs) in this passage?** *Created.*
- ? **What type of literature is this passage?** *History. As we read through the rest of Genesis 1, Moses presents a straightforward account of God's creative acts over a six-day period.*
- ? **Are there any figures of speech in the text?** *The language is direct, but the phrase "heavens and earth" is a figure of speech (called a merism) that is used to include everything in the entire universe.*
- ? **What is the historical context of the passage?** *This is the very beginning of time—before this there was no time.*
- ? **What is the biblical context of the passage?** *This passage sets the tone for the entire Bible. It assumes that God exists without trying to prove it in any way.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *God existed before time and created the universe.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about God?** *This passage tells us that God existed before there was time. This idea is confirmed by many other passages, as we will see later. This leads us to the conclusion that God is eternal and self-existent.*

Genesis 1:1

Discover the Truth

- ? **Why is God the only one there?** *Allow students to answer. Because God hadn't created anything yet.*

This is the beginning of time as we know it. This is when God started to create the universe by the power of His Word, only about 6,000 years ago.

- ? **So what was before this?** *Allow students to answer.*

Before Genesis 1:1, all that existed was God. God is infinite. That means He has always existed and He will always exist. He is the only eternal being.

Now that we have asked questions about the text to draw out the ideas, let's look for the main point of this verse in light of today's lesson topic.

- ? **What truth about God's existence do we draw from this passage?** *God existed before there was time and He created the universe. God exists outside of time and created time as part of the universe (Isaiah 57:15). Emphasize the eternity of God as one of His attributes, referring to the Attributes of God poster.*



eternal

READ THE WORD

Now go to the book of Exodus. We're going to read a little about Moses. God had sent Moses to lead His children out of Egypt and into the Promised Land—a beautiful country God had prepared for them.

However, Moses was afraid to lead the people as God asked him. Moses didn't think the people would listen to him or want him to be in charge. God assured Moses that He would be with him. Yet Moses still had his doubts. Let's read together what Moses asked God and how God answered.

Let's read Exodus 3:13–15. *When everyone finds it, have someone read the passage.*

Exodus 3:13–15

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What did Moses ask God?** *What shall I tell the children of Israel? Who should I say sent me? What is Your name?*
- ? **What is God's answer in verse 14?** *He said I AM WHO I AM and I AM has sent me to you.*

Right. God said His name was I AM.

When God said this, He was saying that He is the one who is and always will be. God Himself was telling Moses that He is eternal.

Discover the Truth

Again, we have the Bible—God's Word—telling us that God is the eternal one—the one who always was, the great I AM. You see, something or

someone had to be here before anything else came to be. Do you see that? There had to be someone who never had a beginning—someone who was there when creation began. That someone is the one and only true God. He is God of creation, He is the God of Moses, and He is the same God for us today. He is the same God throughout all the future ages, too. God exists! He is the only eternal one. He is the one that had to be before anything we know of existed.

So we know that there had to be someone who didn't have a beginning. And if we can imagine—back, back, back—further than we can even imagine—there is God the eternal one who is not bound by the time that He created.

Take a look at our timeline poster. You could put hundreds of timelines just like this one—one right after the other—and still God exists. He has always been here. Someone had to be here to begin creation. *You can reference the Seven C's Timeline to make this point.*



READ THE WORD

Turn to Romans 1:20–21. Romans is an epistle or letter that was written by the Apostle Paul. God wanted Paul to write this section to people who said they didn't believe in Him. Let's see what God has to say about that.

Let's read Romans 1:20–21. *Assign readers.*

Romans 1:20–21

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Now who did I say Paul was talking about in this part of his letter? *People who did not believe in God.*
- ? OK. Look carefully at verse 20. What is clearly seen in this text? *His invisible attributes.*
- ? Whose invisible attributes? Who is "His" referring to in this verse? *God.*
- ? What might some of those invisible attributes be? We mentioned some already today. *Refer to the Attributes of God poster. Talk briefly about these attributes—they reflect God and God alone.*
- ? Good. Now how long have God's attributes been seen by men? We are still looking at verse 20. *Since the creation of the world.*
- ? So this verse confirms what we were talking about earlier. What does verse 20 say can be understood by looking at the things that are made—or by creation? *God; His eternal power; His Godhead.*

Godhead:
God's divine
nature; His
attributes

When Scripture refers to Godhead it means God's divine nature. His divine nature or Godhead simply means the attributes of God we are learning. *Again, refer to the Attributes of God poster.*

- ? So this part of the letter was written about people who say there is no God. What does God say to that? It is at the very end of verse 20. *They are without excuse.*
- ? Look at the beginning of verse 21. Did these people know God? *Yes.*
- ? How do they know God? *By the things God created.*
- ? They know who God is because of what God made—God tells us that. But how did these people act toward God? The answer is in verse 21. *They did not glorify Him as God. They were not thankful. Their hearts were foolish and dark. Their thoughts were futile.*

Yes. Their thoughts were futile. This means their thoughts had no purpose—they were foolish. They made no sense because God was not a part of them. They did not believe in God.

God is saying in His Word here that all people are able to look around at what He has created and know in their hearts that there is a God. But even then, some will choose to deny what they know to be true and turn away from Him and say there is no God or choose to worship false gods. That's why Paul calls them foolish. They know better, but refuse to admit it.

Discover the Truth

There is a very important lesson here in just these two verses! Even back when Paul wrote this letter—and that was almost 2,000 years ago—people were claiming that there is no God.

- ? Yet God tells us in the book of Romans that there is a way that all men know that He exists. What is that? *Through His creation.*

Creation reveals God's eternal power and His divine nature. Because of the very universe that God created we know that there has to be a Creator.

- ? Have you ever noticed how orderly and perfect the universe is? *Yes/no.*

The stars, solar system, plants, animals, the human body—everything is designed to do what it is supposed to do. It is all perfectly organized and designed. Color, variety, and detail all point to an eternal God with a plan and the power to make it all. The passage tells us that when we look at all of His creation we can't help but think of Him, our Creator. If people say they don't believe in God, they are denying the evidence all around them.

- ? Have any of you heard of the big bang? What do you know about that? *Allow students to answer.*

To people who don't believe in God or His Word, the big bang is a way to explain how the universe came into existence without God. But it really doesn't make any sense at all. These people believe that there was just one tiny speck of something, but they don't know where that came from. And then there was a huge explosion—a bang—and all the pieces from

the bang came together perfectly to begin the creation of the universe, and all that we see today is a result of the big bang. This is nothing but a lie. And people who teach this want to turn us away from God's Word and His truth.

When we look around and see the universe and everything designed in a special way to do what it is supposed to do, then we need to remember that only God could have created it. There is no way it was the result of a big bang. And this is exactly what God's Word tells us in Romans 1. We know that God exists because of the amazing universe only He could have created!



Big Bang—Sense or Nonsense?

MATERIALS

- ❑ LEGO® bricks in a box or bag, a model airplane or car not assembled, a jigsaw puzzle, or some other puzzle unassembled

INSTRUCTIONS

Bring out your box or boxes of pieces. You will allow the students to shake them up well and dump them out to emulate the big bang. Will you get something orderly?

So, many scientists teach that the universe came into existence without God, as a result of the "big bang." Somehow, they think that a big bang can blow stuff up into a lot of different pieces and when the pieces come together, they will make something organized, well-designed, and orderly— like the universe. Let's see about that.

I have a box of (LEGO® bricks, model parts, puzzle pieces, etc.) here. I want some of

you to take turns shaking this box up real well and then dumping the pieces out. You can cause your own big bang, and we'll see if the pieces fall together in a sensible way. Let's see if our pieces can make something organized from us just dumping them out.

- ? **Who wants to start?** *Allow some or all of the students to "blow up" your pieces to see if anything sensible comes out.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? Will anything organized ever result from the process we are following? *No.*
- ? Can the big bang explain the order and design in the universe? *No.*
- ? What is the only explanation for the organization in the universe? *God created the universe, as the Bible describes.*





Applying God's Word

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

We have seen from several passages of Scripture that God's existence as the self-sufficient and eternal Creator of the universe is presupposed from the very first verse of the Bible. God has not instructed His followers to spend time presenting physical evidences in an attempt to convince unbelievers that He exists. For example, Romans 10:17 does not say, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by amazing scientific evidences that proves the Bible to be true." On the contrary, the passage states: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." No amount of physical evidence can convert a sinner to becoming a child of God. Thankfully, this responsibility belongs to the Holy Spirit.

? **What does the Scripture have to say about believers' responsibility for sharing their faith?** *All believers are to share their faith and witness to those around them.*

Some Christians say they are afraid of sharing Scripture with non-Christians, because they think the non-Christian won't believe the Bible. There is no place in the Bible where God holds a believer accountable for causing a non-believer to reject His message of salvation when it has been presented using His Word (1 Peter 3:15). Therefore, we should never be afraid that we will "turn someone off" by showing them God's Word. Christians should never be fearful of using the Bible in sharing their faith because there are many passages encouraging believers to proclaim God's Word to everyone as often as possible. Therefore, we should never be fearful or ashamed to communicate God's Word to any unbeliever.

? **If someone asks you how you know God exists how would you respond?** *Some students will probably say they would start with the Bible. However, you can expect some, if not many, students to ask, "But what if the person will not listen to the Bible?" This is a valid concern, but we must always consider the Bible to be our ultimate authority. If we put evidence before Scripture, the evidence becomes the authority.*

? **What is the proper role of evidence in our defense of the faith?** *Many Christians feel compelled to use the argument from design; the idea that if we find a complex object, such as a watch, it must have been created by a designer. Others may mention probability arguments concerning the extreme odds against a "simple" cell evolving by chance. While these ideas are compelling to some, they cannot prove the existence of God or cause someone to believe in Him. They can, however, be used to confirm what the Bible says about God and His Creation. This is where many Christians err when attempting to defend their faith. They place too heavy of an emphasis on scientific information, and Scripture is left out of the discussion until a positive response is elicited from the evidence. Or worse, Scripture is left out altogether.*

? **Are Christians sometimes more comfortable explaining scientific evidences rather than Scripture when speaking with skeptics?** *Have students share their thoughts. The answers will likely reflect their comfort level with using scientific evidences rather than sharing God's Word.*

? **Is an evidence-first approach to evangelism/apologetics ever useful?** *Yes. For example, an unbeliever might start a conversation by saying there are no evidences for the truthfulness of the Bible and/or the existence of God. It would be perfectly appropriate to respond by saying you disagree and then give a few supporting evidences. However, it is imperative that God's Word is brought into the discussion as quickly as possible. This lets the listener know why you're interpreting the evidences as you are, and allows God's Word to begin working on their heart. Remember, if the listener refuses to hear God's Word, it is not your fault. It is a problem between them and their Creator, and God is faithful to ensure His Word will accomplish His will in their lives (Isaiah 55:11). We have to be faithful to give them the only remedy for their sin problem—God's Word, not science.*

The following are two confirming evidences for the existence of the biblical God. These can be used to help people see what they may be missing or suppressing and how only the God of the Bible can make sense of what we see in the world around us.

Information Science: We can define information as a coded message containing an expected action and intended purpose. We find this kind of information in the DNA in the cells of every living organism, in amounts almost beyond imagination. The theorems of information science show us that new information *cannot* arise spontaneously in matter by chance process. Information always comes from an intelligent source. The discovery of such vast amounts of information in every living thing supports what we read in the Bible concerning the creative acts of an all-powerful God. God was the intelligence behind the message we find in the DNA of living things. No other explanation can account for this information, so the necessity of God's existence is clear through what He has created.

Consider playing the audio clip "Where Did God Come From?" to reinforce this point. You will find this on the Resource DVD-ROM or online at www.answersingenesis.org/media/audio/answers-daily/volume-059/where-did-god-come-from.

Irreducible Complexity: Many systems found in living organisms are interdependent on each other. For example, in order for our blood to clot when we are injured, a lot of chemical reactions must take

place in a very specific order. If just one of these parts are missing, the entire process fails. Hemophilia is an example of a disorder where one or more of these interdependent parts are missing or non-functional. Systems such as this pose an enormous problem for molecules-to-man evolution, because they require all of their component parts from the very beginning, or the whole system cannot function. This complexity is explained only by the Creator we read of in the Bible—the systems were made to function at the time of their creation.

Using such evidences to confirm the existence of God is a great way to answer the questions of skeptics. What we have to be careful of is not elevating the evidences in nature above what the Bible says. If our interpretation of the evidence from nature can prove the Bible is true, then our interpretation becomes the authority over Scripture. That is the difference between thinking in an *evidential* way as opposed to a *presuppositional* way. The Bible should be our ultimate authority—our basic presupposition.

? Have any of you ever had a skeptic question why you believe in God? *Allow students to share their experiences.*

? How did you handle their questions? Are there things you would like to do differently in light of what we have discussed today? *Allow students to express their frustrations, triumphs, and questions. Use this as an opportunity to apply what's been taught in the lesson to the experiences being shared. Be careful not to single out obvious "mistakes." Your students are new to this material and most likely did not know better. This is a time to train and equip your students for future apologetic situations.*



MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 119:89–90 Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Pray for the ability to retain the information and for opportunities to share what has been learned in class.
- Praise God that He has revealed Himself to us and that we can trust Him in all things.

