



The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. Proverbs 18:15

Does God exist?

General question: Is the message of Christianity true?

Also asked as:

How can you be sure that there is a God?

How can you believe in something that you cannot see?

I am an atheist and...

I am an agnostic and...

Similar questions answered separately:

Is the Bible reliable?

What about the hypocrites?

Are miracles real?

Did the Resurrection of Jesus really happen?

Is Jesus God?

A caution: This question may be a casual diversion or it may be motivated by another question. If a relative or close friend has been diagnosed with a fatal illness (or died), a person may challenge the existence of God when he or she is really asking about why innocent people suffer. Additionally, severe need for God may be expressed as rejection of God and His existence.

The short answer:

There are many things that we do not see and yet know that they exist ... such as humidity, air pressure, life insurance, courage, and loyalty. We know, and are sure that they exist, because we see the consequences of them. There is direct evidence for the existence of a personal, eternal God. There is substantial evidence ... the Bible, Jesus Christ, changed lives, and the material universe. Additionally, there is circumstantial evidence for the existence of God. The material universe and the manishness of man are insufficient causes for their own existence. Man's morality and religiosity substantiate the existence of God. Man's rational course is to seek God ... to know of His existence and to know Him personally. If the God of the Bible is truly God, then it is eternally important that we seek Him ... and that we follow Him on His terms.

The longer answer:

A standard of proof. What standard of proof is acceptable in seeking the answer about the existence of God? When you drive south on the US Interstate from eastern Massachusetts, you come to a road sign that states, *Welcome to Connecticut*. When you pass that road sign, you are convinced that you are in Connecticut. Your standard of proof is not very demanding ... simply passing an official-looking road sign is sufficient. However, you require a higher standard of proof if your doctor suggests a life threatening operation after a surprise diagnosis. You may want a second opinion, references from patients or other doctors, and a history of his education and experience. The standard of proof in the US courts for a civil case is the *preponderance of the evidence*, i.e., guilty or innocent by at least 51%. In a criminal case, the US courts require the more demanding standard of *beyond a reasonable doubt*. I have had to use that latter standard of proof as the foreman of the jury deciding the guilt or innocence of a teenage man on trial for a drug-related murder. The jury had the responsibility to decide. It should have been an easy decision. The man revealed his guilt by confessing to the police and again to the jury. The weapon was his. There were eyewitnesses. His motive was obvious in that the dead man's drug gang had shot his brother the day before this shooting. However, he claimed that he did not know that his brother had been shot. His defense was that he was just trying to frighten the man as he shot him several times from close range with a 9 mm revolver. His guilt was obvious. However, some on the jury did not want to decide. Some wanted to delay the decision. However, we needed to decide. The direct evidence was factual and sufficient. Moreover, circumstantial evidence supported the direct evidence. After two days of deliberation, we made our *beyond a reasonable doubt* decision based on the body of evidence. There is a sufficient and conclusive body of evidence for the existence of the God of the Bible. The evidence, direct and circumstantial, conclusively proves His existence. There is no need to delay a decision. Our eternity is in the balances ... it is time to decide.

Two illogical excuses. Some people try to delay, or avoid, a decision about God's existence by asserting that they will not believe in something that they cannot see or touch. That is illogical. People believe in love, courage, life insurance, electricity, air pressure, and wind. We cannot see these ... but we all know they exist. One may try to refute this by saying, *Yes, I cannot see them but I have seen the effects of them and therefore I know they exist*. However, the same can be said of the existence of the God of the Bible ... *Yes, I cannot see Him but I have seen the effect of Him in my own life, in the lives of others, and in the world*. Another illogical excuse is one that asserts that only firsthand evidence is acceptable. However, to hold to that position is to reject almost all of our formal education. Years before I walked across Red Square, I knew from my study of history and geography that Moscow existed. In the same way, I knew that the English Channel existed before I crossed it in a hovercraft. We all know that the Roman Empire existed ... as did Alexander the Great, Sir Isaac Newton, Napoleon, and Martin Luther. I know that The World Trade Center existed. I visited it several times ... taking the elevator to the observation deck high above Manhattan. Now, for someone who never had visited, its existence is solely based on secondhand information. Secondhand information is valid and credible. Do not let illogical excuses keep you from investigating the credible evidence for the existence of God.

An atheist and the possibility of God's existence. An atheist, by a formal definition, is a person who believes that the evidence is sufficient to prove and know that there is no God. However, in common usage, it simply refers to someone who denies that there is a God. Imagine a very large circle that represents all knowledge of all time (past, present, and future). Imagine a much smaller, dot-sized circle inside the large circle. The small circle represents your and my combined knowledge ... a very small part of all knowledge. We may assert that the knowledge of God's existence is not inside our small circle of personal knowledge. However, we can make no logical assertions about what is not inside the larger circle. Logically, we must conclude that the knowledge of God's existence may be somewhere in that bigger circle. Without all knowledge, it is illogical to conclude that God does not exist. Only a being with all knowledge could logically be an atheist ... only God could be an atheist. The more logical conclusion is that God might exist. That is agnosticism as commonly defined. An atheist holds to an indefensible position.

An agnostic and the probability of God's existence. An agnostic, in the formal sense, is a person who believes that the evidence is sufficient to prove and know that the existence of God is unknown and unknowable. However, in common usage it simply refers to a person who has doubt about the existence of God. For the formal agnostic, the same argument applies as does for the atheist. We can make no logical assertions about knowledge that is outside our small circle of knowledge. Therefore, formal agnosticism is indefensible. Of the two usages each of the terms atheism and agnosticism, the only logical possibility is agnosticism in the common usage describing someone who has doubt about God's existence. Additionally, the only logical course of action for that person is one of investigating the evidence for God's existence. The rational course of action for the agnostic is one that seeks Him. If God is God, then He is infinite. We are finite. Being finite, we cannot know everything about an infinite God. If we could know all about Him, then He would not be God. However, we can know enough about Him to know who He is and that He exists. There is sufficient evidence for us to reach a verdict that is beyond a reasonable doubt.

Factual evidence. There is conclusive evidence for the existence of God. Some of that evidence is mentioned here with some additionally explained in other answers in this eSeeker section ... specifically in *Is Jesus God?*, *Was Jesus resurrected?*, and *Is the Bible reliable?*

The Bible. The Bible is self-declared as the Word of God. It is not simply a book about God ... it is a book from God. Forty authors wrote its 66 books over a period of ~1,500 years with one consistent, non-contradictory message. Archeology, history, fulfilled prophecy, and the vast number of early manuscripts confirm its accuracy. Centuries of discovery and study have only increased the credibility of the Bible. The Bible is factual, reliable, documented evidence of the existence of God.

Jesus Christ. Many men spoke about God, and for God, in Old and New Testament times. Jesus was different. He was God Himself ... come to earth to communicate to mankind. He was deity who came to humanity so that humanity could know true deity. *"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things,*

through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power," Hebrews 1:1-3. Jesus was firsthand evidence for the existence of God.

Changed lives. The message of Christianity is not one of guaranteed earthly health and wealth. In this life, we may have great difficulty. However, God gives personal peace, joy, courage, and strength ... and confidence in life eternal. And with Him, there is no fear of death. In addition, those who have believed in Jesus have left His mark on our world through their efforts to bring education to the uneducated, medical treatment to the ill, freedom to slaves, and many other good works. Christians have been the most generous people in serving the hurting people of this world ... generous with their lives and money.

Confident deaths. The reality of the existence of God, and specifically the deity of Jesus, changed the lives of His followers. His disciples not only spread His message but many were brutally martyred for their faith in Jesus as God and Savior. The Apostle John was the one exception ... exiled in his old age. Threats of martyrdom, and martyrdom itself, did not diminish their confidence. Many more, from the first century until today, have believed in Jesus. They too have faced persecution and death with confidence that God exists and that their eternity is secure because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

The material Universe. A painting is an insufficient cause of itself. Paint factory explosions do not create masterpieces. A sculptor creates a sculpture ... an author writes a book ... a composer composes a symphony ... a builder builds a building. Likewise, the material Universe is an insufficient cause of itself. The Creator created His creation ... and the fingerprints of the Artist are on His masterpiece. *"The Heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands," Psalm 19:1.*

Evidence from earth's origins. All explanations of the beginnings of the Universe (the Big Bang Theory, Intelligent Design, and Creation) cannot be proven by the science since repetition is impossible. The following four explanations of our origins have been considered for centuries.

The Universe is an illusion. Some people have studied the Universe, taken in data via their senses, and concluded that all they have seen and studied is an illusion. They may sit at a computer writing their discourse on the subject. At the end of their writing, they save their word-processor document ... click print ... shut down their software ... turn off their computer ... and as they leave their office, turn off the lights and shut the door. None of these actions makes any sense if the Universe and their existence is an illusion. All their study and data would only be illusion ... as would be their conclusion. The position that the Universe is an illusion is irrational, illogical, and non-provable. It is indefensible.

The Universe is eternal. This belief contradicts what we know to be the basic building blocks and laws of science ... and contradicts what we observe. The First Law of Thermodynamics states that mass and energy are interchangeable ($E=mc^2$) and that their

combined sum is a constant. Mass and energy are changing back-and-forth into each other ... but their combined sum does not change. This could be true even if the universe were eternal. However, the Second Law of Thermodynamics states that Entropy is constantly increasing. That is relatively easy to understand. The randomness, or uselessness, of mass and energy is constantly increasing. More simply stated, their recoverable usefulness is constantly decreasing. They "wear out like a garment," Psalm 102:26. The Universe is winding down ... not winding up. The First Law could be graphed as a flat horizontal line. The Second Law could then be graphed as a downward exponential decay curve showing the usefulness of mass and energy decreasing. Imagine tracing backwards up that Second Law decay curve. At some point in the past, it would reach the horizontal line of the First Law ... but it cannot go above it. Usefulness of mass and energy cannot exceed the total of mass and energy. The intersection of the two Laws (where Entropy is zero) is the beginning point of the Universe we know. No mass or energy could exist before that ... unless the Second Law was not in force. The Universe must have had a beginning ... a beginning with no pre-existent physical mass or energy. The assertion that the Universe is eternal is scientifically illogical.

The Universe emerged from nothing. This position contradicts science. It specifically contradicts the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics as explained above in the previous paragraph. It contradicts our human experience. Every effect has a cause. From true nothing comes nothing. In reality, something always comes from something ... or from someone. Some people who hold to this position are somewhat dishonest. They are not saying that the Universe came from true nothing. They are saying that the Universe came from "something" that they are calling "nothing" ... specifically that it came from hydrogen. However, hydrogen is not nothing ... it is something. An atom exploding in a big bang was something before it exploded. However, that atom could not have been eternal. A thing cannot be eternal. Someone, an infinite God, could and would be eternal. The idea that the universe arose from true nothing is illogical.

The Universe came from an eternal being. The one rational conclusion is that an eternal, personal being caused the Universe. Every material *thing* has a causal creator ... cell phones, computers, automobiles, art, literature, clothing, buildings, and more. No material object is a sufficient cause of itself. Moreover, intelligent design without an intelligent being is illogical. Architectural plans are obviously the creation of a personal architect ... they do not exist in a vacuum. No print shop explosion creates an author-less novel. No riverside brickyard explosion creates a non-engineered four-lane bridge. Complex material objects come from more complex creators. The Universe is an insufficient cause for itself. Its design demands a designer. The manishness of man, i.e., his complex being and personality, requires a more complex personal designer and Creator. The evidence points to an eternal, personal being as the origin of the Universe.

Philosophical evidence. There are many classic arguments for the existence of God. Many of these circumstantial evidences could also be called philosophical arguments. They point to, or imply, the existence of an eternal, personal God. However, they do more than imply His

existence. The preponderance of these philosophical evidences adds to the conclusive proof of the existence of an eternal, personal God.

The cosmological argument. Every thing is caused by something other than itself. Every positive thing is caused by something greater than itself. No material thing is self-created. The Cosmos, in all of its complexity is an insufficient cause of itself. It must have been created by something other than itself ... by something greater than itself. An eternal, personal, non-material Creator must have created it.

The teleological argument. This is the *proof from design* argument. The design of the watch proves that its watchmaker exists. Every painting proves a painter ... every sculpture a sculptor ... every building a builder ... every complex design a more complex designer. The Universe displays great and complex design, artistry, and creativity ... proving the existence of a greater-than-the-Universe Designer/Creator.

The anthropological argument. The distinctiveness of man, his complex being and personality, is evidence of the existence of God as his Creator. Man's ability to think, feel, chose, reflect on the past, consider the future, contemplate life after death, regret, hope, be merciful, create, appreciate art, reason, judge fairness, seek truth, and seek answers about God makes him distinctive. Natural selection and survival of the fittest do not explain how these attributes came into being. Most of these attributes are actually counterproductive to natural selection and survival of the fittest. God as man's Creator is a sufficient explanation of the mannishness of man.

The morality argument. Moral laws describe what *ought* to be. Man has an inner sense of fairness, justice, right, and wrong. We recognize the contrast between good and evil, mercy and cruelty, truth and falsehood, and generosity and selfishness. Our good morality is unexplained by natural selection and survival of the fittest. Actually, good morality is contradictory to survival and advancement by those means. We applaud the love and sacrifice of the parents of special needs children. We would be morally outraged if they heartlessly disposed of those children to make room for replacements. We would demand justice if parents starved two of their children to provide food for the one who was strongest and most likely to breed. Although these are examples of survival of the fittest, we reject them. We disdain immorality ... and applaud morality. A few weeks before writing this answer, I called my aunt and uncle to wish them *Happy Anniversary* on their 71st wedding anniversary. They were busy planning their daughter's 50th wedding anniversary party. Isn't that amazing *and* wonderful? Didn't you feel approval as you thought of their long marriage? Our sense of morality, our sense of right and wrong, tells us that their story is right. Moreover, we would reject the idea of a man seeking a divorce after thirty years of marriage because he wants more children from a younger woman of better breeding potential. His motives would be consistent with natural selection and survival of the fittest ... but we would reject his actions because of our sense of morality. Likewise, we reject evil acts, greed, cruelty, lying, and selfishness. What is the source of our morality? Laws of morality imply a moral Lawgiver ... one greater and more moral than man. The morality of man points to the moral Creator of man.

The argument from man's religiosity. Man is religious. Man senses his deep need for God. Man feels somehow disconnected without God ... sensing an inner emptiness and purposelessness. Man senses a purpose greater than himself, greater than his life, greater than his temporalness. Man seeks a connection to God in this life and seeks meaning for eternity. *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God,"* Psalm 42:1. *"I stretch out my hands for You; my soul longs for You, as a parched land,"* Psalm 143:6. Such longing can only be fulfilled for now and eternity by the true God. Man's universal religiosity implies that there is a God who can satisfy his longings.

The evidence-driven verdict. *"That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse,"* Romans 1:19-20. The preponderance of evidence, both direct and circumstantial, proves that God exists. The proof is beyond a *preponderance of the evidence*. It is *beyond a reasonable doubt*. It is conclusive. As finite people, we cannot know everything about the infinite God. If everything about God was knowable to us, He would be finite and therefore not God. However, we can know enough about God to come to the informed and logical conclusion that He exists. Jesus, being God, came to earth to reveal God to us ... to give us proof. The conclusion, the verdict rationally and logically driven by the significant body of evidence, is that *God exists ... the God of the Bible is the true and existent God.*

A course of action. The following suggestions are for you as you seek God.

Seek Him. If you, or some friend, are struggling with the question about the reality of God's existence, my suggestion is that you, or your friend, seek God with all sincerity. Seek Him with all of your heart. The conditional promise of God, from the Old Testament is, *"You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all of your heart,"* Jeremiah 29:13. Moreover, Jesus said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened,"* Matthew 7:7-8. The God of the Bible is real even if you have not found Him yet. He exists. You can find Him ... that is His promise. The God of the Bible is knowable. However, you must seek Him with all of your heart.

Pray. Even if you are not sure that God exists, pray. Be honest ... and be sincere. Pray something like this, *God, if you are there, and I am not sure that you are, please reveal yourself to me. I want to know if you are real. I want to know if Jesus really is God. Amen.*

Read the Bible. Do not reject the possibility of God's existence without a serious evaluation of His book. The Bible is the self-declared Word of God. The Gospel of John, the 4th book in the New Testament, would be a good place to start. It is a clear statement of who Jesus is ... and defines what is required to be God's child.

Look for answers. The website from which this answer comes, www.eSeeker.org, contains answers to many of the most frequently asked questions. Start there as you

look for reasonable answers to reasonable questions. If you cannot find an answer for your question on eSeeker, contact the author of these answers by email.

Find out what God wants from you. There is another Web site that you should visit. It is www.911GOD.org. It presents the basic message of Christianity. It explains how you can come to God on His terms ... how you can be His child for eternity.

The existence of God ... a dictionary of terms.

These theological terms are often used in discussions about the existence of God. All uses of the word God are capitalized on this page even when referring to false Gods. Only the terms marked with an * on this page can be appropriately used in describing the God of the Bible. The others on this page cannot.

Animism asserts that individual spirits inhabit natural objects and phenomena such as rocks, trees, rivers, wind, and storms. Animism is found in the New Age movement, in primitive religions, and in folk versions of Hinduism and Islam. It is estimated that 30 to 40% of the world holds to some form of animism.

Deism asserts that one God created the world to be independent of its creator. It is theism without the creator's revelation or intervention. Deism's God is to the world as the watchmaker is to the watch. Examples of deists are Thomas Paine (author of Rights of Man and The Age of Reason) and third US President, Thomas Jefferson.

Henotheism is polytheism with one central, supreme God among lesser Gods ... such as Zeus being above and among many lesser mythological Greek Gods. Mormonism holds to this view with Elohiym (God the Father) as the supreme God above many others who were pre-existent beings that became men before evolving into Gods (such as Jesus).

Immanence* is the characteristic of God pervading and sustaining the Universe. The Bible speaks of God being both immanent and transcendent (see below). Immanent and imminent are different words. Imminent means that something is pending or about to happen. Immanent means that the Universe was created by and is dependent on God. The Bible presents God as immanent.

Monotheism* is the belief that there is one and only one God.

Pantheism asserts that God and the material world are one. All is God. God is all. Examples of pantheism include many Buddhists, most Hindus, the New Age movement, Christian Science, the Unity Church, and Scientology.

Panentheism asserts that all things are in God and part of God, but God is greater than the sum of things. Some who claim to be Christian believe this. Some who may be Christian hold to some form of this weak unbiblical view of God. Panentheism teaches that God is progressing, changing, evolving, or learning. To them, God is the director rather than the Creator of the Universe ... more temporal than eternal ... more finite than infinite ... being perfected rather than already perfect ... evolving rather than immutable ... and dependent on rather than sovereign over the Universe. Forms of this are called Process Theology (God is in a personal process), Bipolar Theology (God as the mind is one pole and the Universe as the body is the other pole), Organicism (God and the Universe is one enormous organism), and Neoclassical Theism (God is finite).

Polytheism believes that many Gods exist ... hierarchally organized or equal in position.

Theism* asserts that an infinite, personal God created the Universe, sustains it, reveals Himself to it, and intervenes in it. Examples include Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. However, the God of Islam (Allah) is not the God of the Bible.

Transcendence* is the characteristic of God being above and separated from the Universe. He is distinct from His creation. The Bible presents God as transcendent.

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