



WHAT IF
YOU ARE WRONG?

JON BJORGAARD

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BY REV. JON BJORGAARD



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What If You Are Wrong?

Everyone believes something. It is part of our nature to believe. We cannot see air, but we believe that it is there, or we would not be able to breathe or survive. We cannot see sound waves, but we know they exist, or else we would be unable to hear. When it comes to matters of faith, or even a lack thereof, belief in some way, shape or form affects every one of us.

There are thousands of differing belief systems in the world, and Christianity — with approximately two billion followers — is the world's largest religion. Specifically, it is the belief in one God who is a Creator, a Savior who removes sin, and a personal God (Holy Spirit) who dwells within the lives of those who believe. What separates Christianity from other religions is that it is the only belief system that does not believe **the way to heaven or the afterlife** is the result of what a person does but rather on what God does for the person. Salvation is not based upon what an individual achieves, but rather upon what God has already done for people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and life after death. For those who follow the beliefs of the Christian Bible, the reason Christians are to do good works is in response to the love God has shown them.

The other religions of the world are based primarily on things that are done by believers — their actions being necessary to determine

whether the individual is worthy of the salvation or the rewards that the god or gods of that religion dictate.

Even though there are hundreds of religions in the world, they can be simplified into two main categories: religions outside Christianity which focus on works that need to be done to earn the favor of the (G)god(s) of that religion. Then there is Christianity which focuses on what God has already done to rescue humans.

I would like to propose that there is a third type of religion. It is one of the fastest growing belief systems and I categorize it as atheist, agnostic and nonreligious, referred to by many as “nones”. To say that this group is not a belief system would not be accurate. Atheists believe that there is/are no (G)god/s. The root of the word ‘atheism’ is ‘theism’ which means god. The “a” in atheism implies “no” god. Some atheists have a personal belief that there are no gods, but do not push their views on others. They are called weak atheists. Another group makes the claim that there are definitely not any gods, and that the existence of god is impossible. They are called strong atheists.

Agnostics have a belief system which declares that it is impossible to prove the existence of God. Agnostics do not necessarily rule out the existence of god(s), but are skeptical about the existence of any deity.

I write this book from a Christian perspective and compare the belief systems of those who do not have a belief (or are skeptical about the existence of God) to Christians who do believe in an eternal God.

In recent years the fastest growing “religious” group in the United States is labeled as those who are irreligious, called “atheists” or “agnostics”. It is believed that there are currently around 20 percent of people in the United States who would be labeled in that group, which has more than doubled in our country over the last 15 years; in fact, during the last five years this group has grown from 15 percent of the American population to its current 20 percent. Thirty-two percent of those 30 years or younger consider themselves as part of this group (Pew Research Poll), and there is a much stronger push from this group to spread their disbelief system than there has been in the past. Some of the more prominent people within this group are Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking. Leaders of the atheist movement are becoming bolder in making their views known. They believe that all religions are human fabrications; moreover, they are organized, and are especially visible on college campuses, tending their claim that science proves that God does not exist. The central belief system within their anti-God movement is based around the assumption that the theory of evolution is more than a theory, but in reality, a Law. Stephen Hawking, recognized as a gifted physicist, has actually created a documentary in which he claims to have scientifically proven — based on his scientific

assumptions — that God does not exist. While watching the documentary, it was obvious that Hawking has some very interesting thoughts in regard to the formation of the universe and life. Hawking presents a series of theories which concludes that the origin of the universe goes back to a black hole which exploded and formed space, time, the universe and ultimately, life. He concludes by asserting that his findings prove that there is no God, and the existence of all things is scientifically explainable (Stephen Hawking, *The Grand Design*, TV Miniseries 2012). What Hawking fails to explain is how the black hole came into being in the first place. What is the origin of the black hole? How did everything begin? How did the big bang happen?

Richard Dawkins, too, has shared his views on a large scale, theorizing that the existence of life on our planet may be the result of aliens from other planets planting us here. What is interesting about this theory is that there is no explanation as to how those aliens came into being. There are many views about the existence of life being presented by those in this movement, but none prove the origin of life scientifically.

Before I received my master’s in divinity I received my major in math and physics. I am one who believes that true science and theology are in agreement. My feeling is that people like Hawking and Dawkins are trying to twist science to discredit faith. There has been discussion for quite some time which attempts to explain how the big bang took place. There have been all kinds of speculation and theories that are

constantly changing. Scientists know if they could clearly prove and explain how the big bang happened, then they could prove the nonexistence of God. The problem for the anti-Christian scientists is that they have not been able to explain scientifically the origin of the universe and life. They can only theorize without providing definitive proof. What I find interesting is that they present their theories in ways that can almost seem as if they are presenting facts; and, I am still amazed that our public schools present evolution to our young people quite often in a factual way, especially when it is only a theory. What is wrong with presenting other views such as creation?

Lately, larger bodies of scientists, many who are unwilling to call themselves Christian, are embracing the theory called “intelligent design.” These scientists are realizing that there is too much order in the universe and in the formation of life for things to have come about randomly through a process of evolution. They realize that the order and complexity of life is so great, that the theory of evolution does not satisfactorily explain the origin of life. As science has advanced, the complexity of the DNA codes and structure of even simple organisms has been found to be much more complex than ever realized. With such findings it becomes even more obvious why people like Richard Dawkins are starting to theorize that we were planted here by aliens from other planets. Yet even in this attempt to take the focus off the genesis of life on this planet, they do not attempt to explain how the alien forms of life on the other planets came into being, or how the

black hole that started the formation of the universe came into existence. The bottom line is that they do not have a clear explanation as to the origin of life and the beginning of the universe. They can only theorize; yet they present their views as factual.

I believe that the only explanation that makes sense is that the big bang was caused by the power of God when He created the heavens and the earth. Before we enter into the main focus of this book, the purpose of this discussion is to show that atheists and agnostics have not been able to prove the premise of their argument that evolution explains the origin of the universe and life itself. They are placing their faith in a theory that has never been proven. I believe that Atheists and Agnostics are also people of faith who place their belief in a scientific system that is not backed by definitive proof.

Rather than a scientific discourse, this book is meant to focus on the ultimate conclusions of the belief systems of nonbelievers in comparisons to those that hold to the belief of Christianity or in a G(g)od who is a Creator. If you would like to look forward into how science and Biblical beliefs do complement each other, I would encourage you to check out the findings of the [Institute for Creation Research](#) and groups like them to learn more for yourself. There are numerous resources available that do a fine job of going much more in depth about how science and the Bible agree. What I ask as you begin this journey is to open your mind to the possibilities that will be presented in this book.

What If Atheists, Agnostics and Non-Believers Are Right?

Imagine that science advances to the point where verifiable research demonstrates that we actually came into existence through the process of evolution. Suppose that scientists are able to prove what caused the big bang and that the universe expanded and formed life which evolved from simple life forms into the complex life forms that now inhabit our planet. Let's say that brilliant scientists are able to definitely prove how the universe came into being and confirm through a scientific chain of events how life came into being. Imagine that scientists were able to show clear and convincing proof to the point where the *theory* of evolution becomes the Law of Evolution. If this happened, what would transpire on our planet?

This would be the fulfillment of the John Lennon song, "Imagine" in which he says:

"Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace".

What would happen if the existence of all religions were proven false and based on myth and fairy tales? Imagine arriving at the conclusion that you were not formed by the hand of a divine Creator, but are here by pure scientific, random chance. It would be quite a shock to those who had previously believed that they had been created. It would be rather embarrassing and humiliating for those who are clergy and church leaders to find out that they were preaching and sharing pure fiction with people. Beyond embarrassing, it would be a disturbing revelation to the world.

Imagine the despair that would tear at the hearts of the majority of people on earth who believe in an afterlife only to find out that when you die, you will cease to exist. Most likely that fastest growing career track would be in the area of secular counseling to help calm the anxieties of those who have found out that their faith was a fraud. I believe that the number one cause of death would be suicide as the hope to which millions hold would vanish. The sale of antidepressants would reach all-time highs as people try to come to grips with their new reality. Questions about the meaning of life would be in the forefront more than at any time in history. Just to comprehend that, rather than being purposefully created by an all-knowing

God, one is just a freak of nature evolved by random chance and that one's existence is only for a very short period. Worldwide, shock and despondency would envelop the vast majority of people of faith.

There would also be huge economic problems as hundreds of thousands of people who were working for churches, religious schools, colleges, and other related institutions, would lose their jobs in the United States alone. Not only would it be difficult for these individuals to find work in the near term but imagine the real estate that would flood the market as churches and related institutions cease to operate. The economic challenge for the entire world would be overwhelming. The number of people who work around the world for religious institutions numbers in the tens or hundreds of millions. Global markets would be impacted as well as a strong likelihood of another great recession if not depression in these already difficult financial times. This would impact everyone including atheists and agnostics. I would not call this the greatest victory party because, in the process, everyone would feel the pain as our country and world plummet into an economic and emotional tailspin.

Since religion would have been proven to be false, upon what basis would right and wrong be determined? Further, who would have the authority to set such standards? Adolf Hitler who was a Darwinist and believer of survival of the fittest, felt that his standards were the right ones. He was such a strong leader that he caused

many of the German people and some in surrounding countries to follow his views on what is right and what is wrong. To stop any challenges against his world view, he orchestrated the murders and imprisonments of many key religious leaders who opposed his ideology. Look what happened as a result of his personal belief. He tried to eradicate entire cross sections of humanity he deemed unworthy. As a result of his maniacal world vision, millions were killed; consequently, one could reasonably question how many more like him are waiting to impose their twisted views of what is right and wrong? Is this the kind of world that John Lennon envisioned?

For those in the Atheist and Agnostic camps, there would be celebration and contentment in knowing that their views had finally been proven accurate. Their lives would still go on in the same way as before (with the addition of a world in utter chaos) except that people around them would share a similar belief system. They would definitely see some improvement in their lives insofar as the "annoying" people of faith would no longer be trying to "evangelize" and spread their "false" concepts. In their view, society would be on the same page when it comes to understanding the origin of life. But would life really be that much better? If you carefully consider the impact of this transition upon society, the reality would be that life would get worse — much worse.

Who is going to set the standards for life? If we are honest with ourselves, we are beings who struggle with addiction, self-centeredness, twisted thinking, and actions

that sometimes even surprise ourselves. If we are honest, we must recognize that there is something inherently wrong in each of us; and, no matter what our standards of right and wrong, we still think, do and say things that are in opposition to the very benchmarks we set for ourselves.

Nearly all of societies legal systems is use today are based upon the Ten Commandments found in the Christian Bible. If you remove those commandments because they no longer have application what will replace such laws as:

- Honor your father and mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet what does not belong to you.

When you examine these commandments, they encompass large sections of our legal systems. If they are removed, we are left with probing questions: What is a family? Who has the right to decide who can live and who can die? What is the proper use of sexuality? Who has the right to determine ownership of property? What role does lying, slander, libel or defamation of reputation play in a population with no moral absolutes? How can someone truly find contentment? Rather than covet what I do not have, what is stopping me from just taking it from someone else?

It has been proven over time that Christianity has had a crucial role in promoting the expansion of science, literature, morality and education. In addition, our university systems, health care, charities, and social movements have been impacted by Christian ideals. If religions like Christianity are no longer in existence, what will be the impact felt upon the world? Will a world filled with “nones” rise up to make the world a better place? What will be the guiding principle, love or hate? And by the way, how did such complicated emotional feeling evolve from cosmic dust?

It could be said by the atheists and agnostics that there will be fewer wars and much more social acceptance of all styles of life. People could do whatever they wanted without any interference from others. It is true that in religions there are the zealots such as the suicide bombers who would no longer be in business since they will not attain their view of a heaven full of virgins at their disposal. There have been Christians who have done terrible things in the name of their God over the course of history as well. Yet, if you study history carefully, in the vast majority of these situations, it was either religious zealots who did not act in a way which reflects Christian teachings or, individuals reached for political gain and tried to invoke the name of God for their own selfish purposes. At least those things would stop, and I even agree that such change would be welcome as well. The problem, however, is that if everyone were free to do whatever he or she wanted to do, would this not lead to a world of anarchy and lawlessness? Would more people like

Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, or Mao Tse Tung arise who are from a godless, anti-God Darwinian survival of the fittest ideology? One person could say that marriage could extend to those who wish to marry their pet cat; another could say that anyone who runs a stop light should be shot, and someone else could say that all illegal drugs are now legal. This may seem far fetched, but who would have the right to determine such standards? Most likely those in power would assume the authority to do this. The concern I see is that “absolute power corrupts absolutely.” If people are allowed to choose whatever ideology they want and freely live it out, who will determine the limits of what would be acceptable?

I remember as a young boy reading *Lord of the Flies*, the William Golding novel, which portrays the graphic results of what can happen when nature takes its course and the victims like Piggy are left in its wake. When people are left without structure and accountability, anarchy reigns. Imagine the world we would have if we took away the impact of the Christian Scriptures that teach us to love our neighbors as ourselves. What if such a profound lesson were replaced with “Let the strongest rule to divide and conquer?” Who, then, will determine the standards?

As I was writing this book, James Holmes, a 24-year old graduate student from the University of Colorado, walked into a movie theatre and shot more than 70 people. Twelve died and many are still in critical condition. Aside from a traffic ticket, Holmes never had a mark on his record, and was described as extremely intelligent.

He obviously had the capacity to do many great things in life to make this world a better place. Yet, even long after this terrible tragedy, I can sense our whole country is in mourning and families that lost loved ones will never be the same again.

What causes such evil? There may be those who ask, “How could a loving God allow for such terrible things to happen?” That is the wrong question. The question should be, “Why do people do such terrible things?” — Especially for the sake of this discussion in this chapter, because the assumption is that there is no involvement of God. There is an inherent evil in this world and if God is out of the equation, how will this evil be combated? This creates a problem. If God is out of the picture, what is the origin of evil? Who on this planet has the power to subdue this evil power that looms either with God or without Him?

What about the suicide bomber who straps himself with bombs and walks into a crowd at the marketplace and shout, “*Ala Akbar*” (God is great) and blows himself and many other up with him? Did this man act in the name of God or in the name of evil? I know only a God of love, and since evil is the opposite of love, I clearly believe that this man acted in an evil way. Following the argument in this chapter, let’s assume there is not a God; it is then clear that this bomber is evil and delusional. Sadly, this irrational person thinks he is doing a good thing and will be rewarded for it. This type of terrible evil is all around us. But how will it be combated or defeated?

Many assume that religion is the root cause of wars and violence, and by eliminating religions there will be less killing. Is this really true? Was WWI caused by religion? It was caused by groups of people who hated each other, and they used the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand to start a war that would escalate as allies from the various sides came to each other's defense. Did religion cause WWII? WWII was started by an atheist named Adolf Hitler who had the vision of an Arian race controlling the planet at the expense of all "inferior races." Forty million people died because of one person's Darwinian views.

Have there been wars involving religion? The answer would appear to be yes, that is until one studies the political and geographical goals that were being sought. Often, religion was used as the excuse to cause wars. Being a Christian, I realize that there have been some wars caused for religious reasons, and I devote a section to this later in the book.

One of the girls who was killed in the mall shooting at the Aurora movie theater was Jessica Gahwi, a beautiful, aspiring journalist. Just a month before, she got caught in a mall shooting in Toronto and felt she was fortunate to have lived through it. Then one month later she gets caught in the crossfire of another deluded person. What causes some people to do these terrible things? Where and how are their values formed; and what could curb this kind of behavior in a world where there are not moral absolutes?

Put another way: "What is really the value of life?" If we evolved and were brought

into existence by random chance, then what is the value of my life? I can say that I beat the odds because the likelihood of my existence is minuscule. When a human life is conceived alone there are 40 to 600 million sperm cells released from a male into a female during one act of sexual intercourse. Only one combination of a sperm cell fertilizing the egg results in you; actually, the odds of each of us just being born is mind-boggling. When you think of having beaten the odds just to exist, we might as well go straight to the casino and try our luck there; but, aside from being lucky, what else can we fall back on? Rather than being created by a benevolent God, it would take quite some time for those who believe in the realm of eternal life to accept the fact that when you die, it is all over. I had a neighbor who told me that when he dies, he thought it would be like turning a TV set off, like watching the amber glow turn into darkness. Yes, it would make you think that if all you have is this life, you better go for the gusto right now. The Greek civilization called this the Epicurean philosophy, in which you are to "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die."

I would imagine that if evolution is proven true and science could verify the origin of life, that eventually life would go on. The question is, "Would it be better or worse?" Think it through and you be the judge. What have the winners in that debate gained? They will still at some point die and cease to exist and would have the bragging rights of having won the debate. Most likely the world would be in shambles for quite

some time. The economic systems would be in chaos, the emotional wellbeing of billions of believers would be in jeopardy; the major sources of charity would no longer exist, and there would be no moral absolutes to determine what is right and wrong. Rather than a world of acceptance that people like John Lennon envisioned, could it be more a world like Hitler envisioned, a world in which only certain groups like the Arian race existed and the rest are snuffed out? Who is going to hold the corruption in check? Still, if it were proven that God did not exist and we came into existence because some black

hole exploded — or whatever the scientific finding would be to disprove the existence of God — I know that my life would be profoundly changed; but, I do not believe it would be in a better way. Eventually I might find myself landing somewhat on my feet again, but the foundation of my life would be pulled out from underneath me. It scares me to think about the kind of person I would become. I would tip my hat to those of you who would be in the right, but I do not believe our world would head in a better direction. Do you really think it would?

A Formal Apology and a Question

For those of you who are agnostic and atheist, I would like to issue a formal apology for the terrible things that people have done in the name of God. I can speak only on behalf of the Christians since that is the group of which I am a part. The God I know is a God of love, compassion and forgiveness, and over the centuries many so-called Christians have greatly misrepresented this benevolent and loving God. In reality, human beings are imperfect and prone to act in ways that cause great harm to themselves and others. Too often there have been church leaders who have done terrible things in the name of God. In order to accomplish their own self-centered purposes, they have acted in opposition to the God that they claim to follow. Events in history, like the Crusades, led to bloodshed over the conquest of land rather than the Word of God. In the Middle Ages, especially, there were executions of innocent people by those representing the Christian Church. There were even theologians who were burned at the stake. Their “crime” was translating Scriptures into the common language of the people or standing up for principals that would have led the Christian Church of their time in a better direction. Such behavior is inexcusable, and these horrific actions, perpetrated by sinful Christian people in the name of God, misrepresented the Christian faith and its core beliefs.

In the past few years a church called Westboro Baptist has been protesting at military funerals because the military supports the enlistment

of homosexuals. This group of misguided Christians believes they are taking a stand for Christian principals by protesting at the funerals of our brave military people who were killed in battle. Christianity is based upon the principals of love, and the actions of this small group of so-called Christians is an embarrassment to other Christians everywhere, and a total distortion of the Christian faith! Those people should be ashamed of themselves and their poor witness of Christianity. The reality is that there are people who behave in evil ways not only in the Christian church but also outside it.

I must admit there are times when I have misrepresented Him as well. No matter how hard I try to live in love for God and others, I find myself often falling short. I do, think and say things that surprise even me. I would love to be able to do the right things all the time, but I am incapable. My guess is that no matter what our religious views are or lack thereof, you can relate to my situation. What keeps me grounded is that I believe in a God who forgives me and empowers me to try to keep striving to go in the way of love. If I did not have that belief to ground me, it scares me to think of what I would become. If love were not my goal, what would take its place? Even in the realm of evolution and cosmic matter somehow forming life, how could an emotional reaction and decision like love come from the resulting force of a black hole that explodes?

Even If You Are Right, I Still Wouldn't Change Anything

If you are right in that there is a scientific answer to creation and I come to the realization of that truth, would I change anything? The answer is no. My Christian journey has been so wonderful that I would not regret what I had experienced. Even if I found out that God was not real, the moral foundations of what I learned in the Bible would not change. What I have learned about love and forgiveness will always be a part of my life. Through learning to forgive, I have learned to let things go that could hold me back. What I have learned about relationships will still be the same. Though I have read many leadership books, I have never come across any which compare to the Bible. No book gives such amazing advice on how to be a great friend, spouse, parent, child, citizen, neighbor, boss, worker, etc. No leader even compares to Jesus. Even if He was proven to have not existed, I would give huge credit to those who were able to create His persona. Even many secular management and supervision books follow the teachings of Jesus' "servant/leadership" style. There has never been a book in history that has had such profound effect on our society as the Bible. Even if God were proven to be a fantasy, the Bible would still remain as a powerful book with truths that work for

all ages. Those who put the Bible together would have to of been the most profound, imaginative, brilliant writers in history. I believe the Bible would remain a bestselling classic as long as the world was in existence.

The truths in the Bible would still have profound impact on history even if it was written by humans with no divine intervention. I believe the Bible would remain the greatest selling book in history, and would help to give a moral compass to a world wallowing in chaos. What I find interesting is that even the main religions outside of Christianity have incorporated the basic moral teachings found in the Bible and utilized them in their own Scriptures. Examples of this are the Koran and the *Book of Mormon*.

Through the promotion of an unconditional love focused on giving instead of taking, the Bible has positively impacted our entire world. When you look at what is called the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) how could any of these things be considered negative human characteristics? How could anyone come up with such an amazing list?

What do you think of the following definition of love?

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (I Corinthians 13:4–8).

Could *Webster's Dictionary* even come close to such an amazing definition?

Even if God were proven to be an imaginary being, what I have learned in the Bible would still be my foundation of life and purpose. Yes, it would be true that when I died I would turn back into cosmic dust; but, at least I would have had a guide book to help navigate me through a life — even one without an eternal focus. Surely, I would be very thankful to those who have written such an amazing book.

CHAPTER 5

The Religion of Evolution

There is not as much of a difference between those who hold religious beliefs and those who have none. It may appear to unbelievers who feel that those who have religious faith believe in something that is invisible. As mentioned earlier, those with no religious beliefs really do have a strong belief system in something that has never been proven. Evolution is a religion in that it tries to explain the existence and purpose of life. The god of evolution is the system of belief that explains how you came into existence. For example, Buddhism does not believe in a deity, but it is a belief system, and is called a religion. If evolution had been proven it would be called a law, but it has not been able to arrive at that status. Textbooks love to present items like the fossil evidence and findings like “Lucy” and the “Peking man.”

Have you ever studied in depth some of these findings? Are you aware that some of them have been proven forgeries and, in some instances as the money was running out on some of the digs, all of a sudden, some amazing find emerges to encourage the dispensing of more grant money? In other situations, the paleontologists construct a figure of a being from just a couple bones. How can they do that and how can we trust the images of their so called “missing links”? If we really evolved from creatures like apes, even evolutionists agree that it would take millions of years. If this is the case, there should be millions of fossils to prove this evidence as apes transitioned into people. So, where are they? Also, if apes gradually turned into humans, why would all the hundreds of variant species during the transition cease to

exist? Shouldn't there be ape people walking around in many differing forms? Yet, in our world there are apes and there are humans, and the difference between the two is huge. I believe that the few finds of skulls, that are the so-called missing links, were either the deformed skulls of humans or of apes. The other possibility is that they were just fabricated.

Did you know that in the Judeo-Christian Old Testament that in the book of Genesis, the very first chapter, that thirteen times in one chapter that God states He made each species of living creatures "after its own kind"? Here is an example:

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals each according to its kinds. And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:21–23).

When I took writing class, I was told that you should not use the same words repetitively. The writer of Genesis whether inspired by God (as I believe) or not, is being very repetitive. Obviously, the writer is trying to make a point. As I interpret it, the writer seems to be communicating that, in his view, each species was made after its own kind and therefore had its own specific DNA code. It is also important to clarify that Christian belief is based on the understanding that those who wrote the Bible were inspired by God. Consequently, the words are viewed

as more than human words, but as words that have come to us from God. It is as if God knew thousands of years in advance that a debate would take place regarding the concept of creation verses evolution.

One thing that seems obvious in life is that dogs breed with dogs, cats with cats, certain types of fish with certain types of fish, and the list goes on and on. You do not see one species breed with a different species. You do not see dogs breeding with cats or horses with giraffes. The various species breed with their own kind. What about the Woolly Mammoth? The species was so much different from other elephants, isn't that an example of evolution? The Woolly Mammoth is still from the species of elephants and still fits into the phylum of that creature. Yes, it is obvious that species can adapt or form into differing versions of their phylum of species. For example, differing types of dogs can be bred, but, that is not evolution; it is selective breeding. It is also true that species of animals can adapt to their own environments. When I used to live in Michigan, I would visit Phoenix in February and I was surprised to see the natives of Phoenix wearing coats in 65-degree weather when I was wearing my short sleeves. Now, I live in Arizona and am one of those natives who wears a jacket when it is 65 degrees. In the end I believe the writer of Genesis was right in stating that "*each species was created after its own kind.*" Evolution is adaptation taken to the extreme.

I could write volumes on this topic alone, but there are people who have written some

great things on this topic. [The Institute of Creation Research](#) has had profound impact on my life by showing scientifically why creation makes the most sense. I once heard a debate when I was still a believer in evolutionary theory between [Ken Ham](#) (a creation researcher and teacher) and a renowned evolutionary professor from the University of Minnesota. During the discourse, the Bible could not be used, and creation and evolution had to be discussed from a purely scientific perspective. Ken Ham completely dominated the debate to the point where the evolutionary scientist was made to look bad and became so frustrated that he did not finish the debate. This was a turning point in my life, steering me away from evolution, and leading me on the road to embrace the Christian faith.

Where is the conclusive research to prove that evolution is factual? It does not exist or the title of “theory” would be replaced with “law.” The second law of thermodynamics states the law of entropy which means the energy is continuously being released. For example, the sun is continuously releasing

energy and is not evolving into a stronger sun. Conversely, it will release energy until it will one day run out of power. If you were to take this book that you are reading (or the electronic device you are reading it on) and leave it for a forty years, when you check on it after those four decades, the paper or machine from which you were reading would not evolve into a fancier book or reading device, but would be in much worse shape. Evolution goes against this basic law of physics (law, not theory) by indicating that living creatures are evolving into more complex creatures (apes to humans for example). Dogs have always been dogs, cats have always been cats, and people have always been people. Show me the clear, definitive proof to support evolution. Where is it? Other than it being presented in schools and universities, media, and conversation as if it were fact — I challenge anyone to back up the rhetoric. Sadly, too many people in our society have been brainwashed into believing the verity of evolution when it has never been definitively proven.

What Would a Godless World Look Like?

To get a clearer understanding of what a Godless world could look like, let's take a look at Godless countries and see a pattern that emerges.

Godless countries have the worst history of abuse of fellow human beings. According to Scott Manning, the author of, "Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation," 149,469,610 people have been killed or starved to death by Communist or secular leaders, and he states in his study that the numbers are still evolving in an upward direction as he does further study and more people are dying in some of these countries. According to his list, here are the top ten perpetrators:

- People's Republic of China: 73,237,000
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republic: 58,627,000
- Russian Federated Socialist Republic: 3,284,000
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea: 3,163,000
- Cambodia: 2,627,000
- Vietnam: 1,670,000
- People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:
1,343,610
- Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: 1,072,000
- Chinese Soviet Republic: 700,000
- People's Republic of Mozambique: 700,000

(Scott Manning, *Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation*)

To put this into perspective, that would be nearly half the population of the United States being wiped out.

What I have just shared with you is terrible even if it stood by itself. What needs to be added to these mind-boggling statistics is the other human rights violations and abuse of people that have been carried out by these Godless leaders and societies. Imagine the hundreds of millions of people who lived, and are living, in fear rather than experiencing lives of freedom; who are living or have lived, lives of oppression under the control of evil secular leaders.

Chris Banescu in his article called the *Communist Holocaust*, states, "In October 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution gave birth to the deadliest ideology in human history — Communism. In less than 100 years, Communism has claimed more than 100 million lives. Today, it continues to enslave one-fifth of the world's people ... A free people cannot afford to forget the evils of communism. We cannot allow the atrocities of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, and Castro to fade into the background of history. We must not forget the trail of blood and tears this Utopian deception has left behind."

Is this the type of ideology that is found with

Godless rule? Is this a potential microcosm of what our world could become if God is removed as he was by Communism? Would it be a world in which corrupt evil people come to the surface and enslave the rest of the population?

Banescu goes on to state, “It is a great moral failing that so many do not know the extent of Communism’s atrocities. While the horrors of Nazism are well known, who know that the Soviet Union murdered 20 million people? Who knows that China’s dictators have slaughtered as many as 60 million? Who knows that the Communist holocaust has exacted a death toll surpassing that of all the wars of the 20th century combined?”

When you think of a world without God, is this what we have to look forward to? History does not lie. All we have to do is take a look at societies in which Godless leaders ruled. Some of these Godless Communist rulers almost make an evil tyrant like Hitler look like a saint. If you were to add Hitler’s death count to the number of those who died in the countries listed in Scott Manning’s study, you have more than 200 million people who perished in the 20th century under the rule of Godless leaders. Is the absence of God the formula for a life of murder, oppression and control? You be the judge.

CHAPTER 7

Who Says that the Bible is Not Scientific?

I would like to share some interesting facts from the book of Genesis, and one from Isaiah.

Why is it that people cannot seem to live past the age of 120? In Genesis 6:3 it says, *I will not contend with man forever, his days will be 120 years.* Prior to this time and for those who were alive when this age limitation was placed in the Bible people lived lives sometimes lasting over 900 years. After this age limit was given, it is interesting to note that you do not see people living past 120 years. Some get very close, but 120 seems to be the maximum age limit of our species.

There is preponderance of evidence of a universal flood at one time in history. I remember as a kid growing up in Minnesota and finding many fossils of aquatic animals in my town just south of St. Paul. Even experts have tried to determine when this flood took place, and the dates some come up which seem to be right around the time Noah’s flood, as recorded in Genesis 9, would have taken place (one source is the [Institute of Creation Research](#)).

Why are the caves and rock structures found at the top of the Grand Canyon formed by water when the river is a mile below these

structures. What cut out these caves and formation? Could it have been the result of a universal flood?

Why are there so many languages in the world? Would it not make more sense if there was one common language? Then you could read from Genesis chapter 11 where God confuses the language of the people to force them to spread out to inhabit other parts of the world.

Why did it take until the 1600's, thanks to the teachings of Galileo and Copernicus, for people to believe the world was round? Did you realize that in Isaiah 40:22 it says: *He sits enthroned on the circle of the earth and its people are like grass-hoppers.* The Hebrew word actually would be better translated "sphere". This section was written more than 700 years prior to the time of Christ, in other words, more than 2700 years ago.

These are just a few of many compelling Biblical facts.

CHAPTER 8

The Theory of God

If we could call evolution a belief system based upon a theory, let's say for example that belief in God could be called a theory since there may not appear to be definitive proof that God exists. Were this the case, which theory could be more believable simply based on available evidence?

Another thing to which science keeps referring is that the universe is expanding. Again, many believe that if you de-expand the universe, it must revert to a starting point — which Hawking believes was a black hole. Currently, this seems to be the most popular exposition for explaining the Big Bang. Still the question remains "Where did the black hole come from?" Returning to Richard Dawkin's idea that we were perhaps planted here by aliens from another planet, the question must be, "Where did they come from?" What science cannot grasp is

the concept of creation. To create means to "make something out of nothing". As human beings we cannot create. We can only rearrange what is already in existence. The idea of calling someone creative is really an incorrect statement since we are incapable of making something out of nothing. "Well," you may ask, "what about the creatures you see in the Star Wars series. Didn't George Lucas create them?" The answer is that he took bits and pieces of animals and things and imaginatively reorganized them into the creatures you see in the Star Wars series. Again, we only have the power to rearrange things. The problem is this: creation cannot create itself.

I also agree with scientists regarding an expanding universe theory. According to recent research, astronomers seem to be indicating that this expansion may

be speeding up. This is a mystery to the scientists, because if anything, the expansion should be slowing down. If things started with a big bang, the initial thrust of that explosion would create a more rapid expansion. Eventually the energy of the thrust would diminish, and the expansion decelerate. The more scientists discover about the universe, the more questions arise as to how everything started and where things are going.

I believe in a big bang myself. My belief is that the big bang came about by the power of God. He said, "Let there be", and there was. At least in this debate, I am proposing a theory as to how something came out of nothing. This is something that scientists cannot logically explain. The assumption by some is that something had to already be in existence. The problem for scientists is to explain scientifically how the 'something' came into being. You can call my proposition the "Theory of God".

Is it possible to prove God scientifically? If the existence of God could be proved scientifically, then probably everyone would believe, and there would be no mystery. The reality is that the God I know is a mysterious God, and his ways are not my ways. He has brought something into existence called faith. The Bible says that faith is *being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see* (Hebrews 11:1).

Let me tell you a little about what I believe. I believe in a God I have never seen in person. I trust in a God who created me out of nothing and provides all the energy and resources I need to survive. I believe He

created this vast universe in which we live and all the living creatures and plants that live on this planet. He loves His creation and is involved in holding things together. He created a planet called earth that is just the right distance, 93,000,000 million miles, from the sun and placed the earth at just the right tilt of 23 and a half degrees so that life could survive. He placed just the right amount of water on the earth as well as the geology, atmosphere and gravity to support life. He created complex human beings like you and me who are comprised of some 30 trillion cells arranged in just the right way to give us the physical features that we have. Inside of each of these human bodies is a life source which I would call a soul. How could rocks and the matter in a black hole explosion possibly cause the existence of a life force that lives in a body as complex as ours? The essence of the God I believe in is love. He loves his creation and especially the humans who live on this planet.

There is a word that may be controversial to those who are outside the Christian belief system. That word is "sin". According to the Christian Bible, sin is thinking, saying or doing things that are outside the province of love. God wants the people of this world to learn and grow in the ways of this love. Still, every one of us falls short in this area. The desire of the God of Christianity is to have every human be in existence with Him forever. The problem is that since His nature is perfect love and a barrier of sin separates us from Him. To take care of this barrier of sin, God Himself acted in time in history to take this problem of sin upon Himself.

That is why He came into this world in the person of Jesus Christ. As the Bible indicates, Jesus lived a perfect life without sin and showed what it means to live in perfect love. His journey took Him to a cross where he willingly gave His life. He was killed by people who were the church of that time and by a government that viewed Him as a threat (Yes, there were even religious zealots back then). The Bible indicates that *the wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23). Jesus took on death in our place and paid the wage for us; and, by believing in Him, our sins are forgiven. As the second part of Romans 6:23 states, *and the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ*. Three days later, on the Sunday after His death, Jesus rose from the dead in spite of the fact that Pilate (the Roman ruler of that area) had put a group of highly trained Roman soldiers around the tomb to make sure nothing could happen. Jesus then spent some time with the disciples whom He had spent three years training. Then, fifty days after this resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven after releasing His power upon those who were His followers. From that time, the Christian Church came into existence; and, in spite of being the most persecuted religion in history, has grown to be the largest with more than 2,000,000,000 followers worldwide. Even our time system is calculated around His birth and life. Further, it is central to our history and the designations of 'B.C.' and 'A. D.' in the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

I believe in a God who has revealed Himself to me as a Creator, a Savior and a personal friend who is with me every day. I talk to Him throughout the day, and I know He is there. I believe He loves me without condition and has removed my sins and shortcomings so that I will spend eternity with Him when my time is done on this planet. I believe that the best is still to come, and that heaven will be an existence far more spectacular than what we experience on this planet — with sights, sounds, dimensions, and wonders that we have never experienced during our earthly life. In this life we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg of what really exists.

You may think I am delusional because, you may think, "This guy is talking to imaginary people." "He also believes in a God who came to this world and performed miracles that make no rational scientific sense." In reality, I have faith in what I believe. I am sure of what I hope for, and I'm even certain of what I do not see. I may not be able to prove to you scientifically that my God exists, but I experience Him in my life daily; so, to me I do not view my belief as the "theory of God", but the "law of God". My faith is factual. It is the foundation of my life and is the most important thing that I possess. My life is dedicated to wanting everyone to experience the love of this God that I have come to know. Even scientifically if you were to remove the "faith" aspect of my life, I would still proclaim belief in an all-powerful God who formed this complex universe. This makes more sense to me than a black hole that spews out matter — and

ultimately human life — where everything randomly assembles in perfect continuity.

The title of this chapter is called the “Theory of God”. To me it is the “law of God” because in my life and experience I have received the proof necessary to fully believe and grasp this Christian faith. If you do not share my faith in God because it is “only a theory,” and could never accept the impact of God’s profound love for us, how then can the full impact of evolution, which is also a theory, ever have a hold on you? Does belief in evolution or godlessness lead to a relationship that brings peace and comfort? Those of you from the non-religious camp most likely view evolution as a law and not as a theory, even though it has never been proven. You see, we are both people of faith; however, we are just placing our faith in

different things. You believe in a big bang in the universe of matter and energy that somehow came together to arrange what we have today, while I believe in an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God who created everything and every one of us. I also believe in a God who loves me and you and wants us to be with Him forever, and who has made this possible by our simply believing that He is the Creator and the one who has solved the problem of “sin” plaguing our world. I believe that my life is not a random chance occurrence, but that God planned my very existence, and He has an eternal plan for me. I also believe that He has an eternal plan for you. Which of these two theories is more reasonably considered a law? You be the judge.

CHAPTER 9

What If You Are Wrong?

There really was not a lot of upside when we dealt with the question, “What if you are right?” Yes, there would be those bragging rights and life would change quite dramatically. The influence of religion would eventually fade, and economic challenges would impact the world for generations. I believe the change would not be for the better, but you have the right to make your own choice. When you died you would cease to exist once your brain shuts down. The only difference would be that everyone would be in that same boat, and those who had previously believed in the concept of heaven would

experience periods of profound psychological conflict. The world would experience a “free for all” as those in power assumed the right to determine the moral absolutes in a godless world. A chaotic existence would result. But we are now going to reverse the question. What if you are wrong?

The year was 1,000 A.D. Many people were taking the Bible literally believing that Jesus would return after one millennium (1,000 years). If people were to take the book of Revelations literally, this second coming of Jesus would occur around the year 1,000

A.D. Large portions of the then-known world embraced Christianity some in fear of that prediction. History tells us that Jesus did not return, and over time, many left the Christian faith. What many failed to realize in both the Christian and secular communities is that the Book of Revelation is not to be taken literally.

On September 11th, 2001 our world was changed when terrorists destroyed New York's World Trade Center buildings, inflicted severe damage on the Pentagon, and killed the brave passengers and crew of flight 93. Many people in the following weeks flocked back to churches; in fact, in many churches attendance nearly doubled. Months later, however, this rapid attendance growth faded away as the lives of people began to return closer to normalcy. I think the bottom line is that nearly everyone has a fear of death. We have no control over it and one day our time will be up. What is the answer for death? What is the answer for life? We live in a world where terrorists could show up at any time as suicide bombers. We drive in cars that go at rapid rates of speed and we can never be sure if the people driving around us are drunk, on drugs, or not mentally stable. Our health can easily change from one day to the next; natural disasters could occur. There are no guarantees as to how long we are going to live except it seems that, for some reason, we cannot live past the age of 120. Even if we live that long, what kind of shape will our body and/or mind be in. My 90-year-old father-in-law lives with us and suffers from severe memory loss. He had been an engineer who designed salt plants,

and now he cannot even figure out how to put his clothes on. Life can be so uncertain and offers no guarantees.

I write this section prior to December 21st 2012, the date the Mayan calendar stopped. It is interesting that their civilization would be able to see so far into the future to predict a winter solstice where the sun and other planets would line up in such a way as to put greater gravitational pull on the earth. There are some who think the earth will lose its ability to sustain life and a series of natural disasters will occur. My guess is that I will be seeing a lot more people in church this year, which I will not complain about. Again, the motivation for some will be fear of death or just the uncertainty of what might happen. Let's say the Mayans were right and the vast majority of people on this planet died, as a result of these disasters. The surprising thing is that even though your body is dead, your soul is still alive, and rather than finding yourself on earth, you find yourself in a terrible place. You arrive at the realization that what Christians believe is true after all and discover that hell is a Godless place. The one who controls this hellish domain is a fallen angel named Satan who is egotistical and self-centered (see Isaiah 14:12–14), and in this dreadful place you experience feelings of regret.

Exactly what hell would be like I do not know for sure other than it is separation from God, and Biblical depictions of it are not very pleasant. It is literally a place that scares the "hell" out of me and a place where God does not want people to go. Now, you may be thinking, "Here we go again, another one of

those judgmental Christians. If God is a God of love, how can He send anyone to hell?”

Imagine that you throw a party, and it is going to be a fantastic event. You have poured your heart, soul, and resources into this function and have invited many people to attend. On the invitations you make it clear that this is going to be a fabulous party and missing out will be a great loss for your invitees. Your desire is that everyone accepts the invitation. Sadly, many people turn down the invitation and miss out on the event. Is the fact that they missed out on this event your fault or is it the fault of the people who turned down the invitation? Yet whenever the concept of hell is brought up, the antennas go up and the fingers are pointed at the idea of a God who would not just let everyone into heaven regardless of his/her beliefs, or lack thereof.

The God I know is a just God, and at the same time, a God who gives His creation a lot of freedom. If you do not want to acknowledge this God and decide that you do not want to associate with Him, and thus turn down His invitation to be with Him forever, would it be His fault if you do not go?

God wants all people to love Him. After all, He is called a Father. He has chosen to not be a forceful God and He does not force us to believe in Him. He could have created a world in which we would always do the right things and live in love always. But in creating a world like that we would not have free choice and would be like robots that are controlled. I personally think it is a very interesting world that He has made.

We are a people who crave interaction. In a world of interactive media we love to be involved in the processes of life. Sometimes we participate directly and other times we just like to observe. The Bible says that we were created in the image of God and this interactive desire that we have is also a characteristic of Him. He wants His creation to interact with Him. If you choose to not be a part in this process, you do not have to be. If you do not want to be with God, He does not force you down that path; but, in the end you go down the path that you choose.

It is also important to know that God does not desire for anyone to be separated from Him. Here are three verses from the Bible that make that fact clear.

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel (Ezekiel 33:11).

This is good, and pleases God our Savior who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:3-4).

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9)

In these three passages we see that it is clear that God's desire is for everyone to know Him and believe. The word 'repent' means to turn from the ways of sin (living outside of love) and turn to Him, His grace and forgiveness. One of the most well-known stories in the Bible is called the parable of

the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). In this story there is a man who has two sons. One son is rebellious and wants to do things his own way. He goes to his father and asks for his share of the inheritance. The interesting thing here is that the father is still alive. The father gives the son what he wants. The son in turn leaves the land of his father and goes out and takes what his father gave him and spends it on a life of wild living. After the money is gone, he finds himself alone with nothing and even takes on the job of caring for pigs, which for a Jewish believer is the most humiliating job one could have. He then remembers how good his father had been to him. He thinks to himself that maybe his dad would take him back as a hired hand. He decides to give it a try. Even while the boy is still a distance from his father's property, the father sees him and comes running out to meet him. He throws himself at the feet of his son because he is so happy he has returned. He holds an incredible feast to celebrate that his son who was lost is now back home. He did not ask about what his son did with the money or what he had done. The father, received his son back with open arms and unconditional love.

What if I am right? What if God is really like this loving father. What do you have to lose by trying to investigate for yourself if Christianity is really true? I have talked with many people who are unbelievers who tell me that they do not believe the Bible is true. I then ask them a simple question, "Have you ever read it?" Nearly always, the answer is "no." How then can someone say that something is untrue if he/she has never

researched it objectively — or even read it. I have heard quite often from unbelieving people that Christians are people who have turned their brains off. Coming from a math and physics background, I went into my search with my brain blazing and decided to read through the Bible even though my intent was to find fault with it. I read straight through the Bible starting with Genesis all the way through Revelation. What I found surprised me completely. I found a book that is historically, archaeologically, grammatically, scientifically, literally, and anthropologically correct. It was like a mirror that helped me to see myself in a new way and introduced me to a personal God who is not just a concept. I discovered a book written by 40 authors in three different continents, over the span of 1,600 years, amazing in a book that does not have any blatant contradictions. The only minor mistakes I could find were ones made by the people who translated the Bible from its original Hebrew and Greek into the English, and in so doing, missed a deeper meaning in a few places.

I have researched the views of atheists and agnostics as well as done studies of the world religions. I have read the *Book of Mormon* and found that none of the history from that book has been uncovered by archeology. As I have studied the various books of scripture in the Mormon Church I have found contradictions between them especially in regards to how they differ from the Bible.

I have studied the Koran and have found historical mistakes in it. One example is

that in the Koran the father of John the Baptist, Zachariah, was referred to as an Old Testament character. (He is from the New Testament). I also see that Mohammad's teachings change as he wrote the Koran. In the first parts of his writing, we see a man of peace, but as his writings evolve, we see that by the end of his life his words are much more focused on violence and control over anyone who is not a Muslim.

In my search for a religion that made sense on all levels, my exhaustive study led me to Christianity. Yes, there are thousands of religions in the world, but again what I have found is that there are only two. For the case of this analysis, I am leaving Atheists and Agnostics in a separate category.

All the world religions except one, focuses on what human beings need to do in order to please the god of gods of their religion. For example, Muslims believe there are five things you need to do to earn the favor of Allah and for some sects there are six. You have to pray five times a day, observe the Holy days, give alms to the poor, make a journey to Mecca in your lifetime, and recite over and over "There is no God but Allah and Mohammad is his prophet". The sixth for some is called "jihad," or holy war, and if you die in such a war against the infidel, you would receive an even greater reward in heaven. In Judaism it is about living by, and following, the law of God. Hinduism which believes in a multiplicity of gods has rituals to observe. It talks of reincarnation which states that if you live a better life, you will be reincarnated into greater states of being in future lives. Buddhism does not necessarily

believe in a god, but in teachings that focus on living a better life and honoring those that have gone before you. In Mormonism, there are many laws that need to be followed and even levels of heaven are earned based upon how well you followed the tenants of the Mormon Church. Jehovah Witnesses believe that only a small number of believers will be in heaven while the rest of the believers will live on earth forever depending upon what they do. All these religions and others not addressed herein focus on "doing" certain things to appease the god or gods of the religion. Many of the concepts are very good in that they instruct people to live moral lives. However, I struggle greatly with the concept of "jihad" because we have all seen what that can lead to.

As you analyze these particular styles of religion there are requirements that the god or gods have for their followers. If you do this, then you get that. If you were to label the type of love these gods have for their followers, what type of love would it be? I would call it 'conditional love'. Implied in these beliefs is the admonition: "I will love you — if you do this or that". For those of you who are parents, do you raise your kids in such a way which suggests: "I will love you if you are the star basketball player", or "If you get a straight A report card", or "If you are the star cheerleader?" Even imperfect parents on this planet will love their children regardless of what they do or do not do.

There is one religion that is set apart from the other world religions in that it focuses on a God of unconditional love. Probably the most quoted statement in the Bible is in

John 3:16. Maybe you have seen it at the site of a sports event printed on a sign. This verse simply states, *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

What this says is that God loves everyone including those who have rejected Him. He does not require us to do anything other than to acknowledge or believe in who He is and what He has done. He just wants us to believe in His existence and purpose. If He is the one who made us, created the universe and offers us an invitation to be with us in an amazing place called heaven, would that be too much to ask? It is important that in the Christian belief we believe in good works as well. The good works we accomplish have nothing to do with whether God accepts us, but are done as our “thank you” for what He has done for us. The fact that I serve as a pastor has nothing to do with my salvation. I do it because I believe it is what God wants me to do. I want to serve Him and others not because I have to, but because I want to. When considering the “do” and “done” religions, I have come to find the God who has done for me what I could not do for myself, a God who loves me and all of humanity unconditionally.

I grew up in Minnesota where my parents took me to church every week. We went not only to church service, but also to Sunday School. I never questioned my parents about this weekly practice because it was ingrained in our lives. I always sensed the presence of a God, but did not know for sure who

He was. In the church I attended, I made a number of friends and because of them it made going to church a lot easier; I could go to church to hang out with my friends. I heard hundreds of sermons and attended Sunday School and Bible study classes throughout my high school years. Still, something was missing in my life, but I was not sure what it was. One of my friends in the youth group who was older than I, and someone I looked up to, would often try to tell me about who Jesus is. I can honestly say that the conversations made me a bit uneasy and sometimes I would intentionally try to change the topic. One summer we went on a youth group canoe trip and I was assigned a canoe with my friend, Dave. Once again, even as we paddled, his conversations led to Jesus. Again, I was not very comfortable with the topic. That evening we set up camp on an island and were sitting around a campfire, about to have a Bible study. The one who led the study was my friend, Dave. The topic that he shared was about Jesus and what it means to receive Him in our hearts. I had heard many times the story of Jesus dying for our sins and rising from the dead, but until that moment it never seemed to resonate with me. As Dave spoke it seemed as if a wall had come down in my mind and the things that Dave was saying began to make complete sense to me. As he was talking about a God who loves each of us and wants us to be with Him forever, I found myself actually believing it. My heart was being stirred and as he talked about how Jesus died for our sins and rose so that we can believe in Him forever, I felt a presence of

peace and love come over me that I wished would last forever. We then had a prayer in which we asked for Jesus to come alive in our hearts, and the feeling of peace and love only intensified. After that prayer was over, my life has not been the same, because on that day I came to “believe” that the God of Christianity is a real and personal God.

I have also come to realize that everyone has his or her own personal journey. In the churches where I have served, most of the people I know have believed in Jesus for as long as they can remember. Others have stories like mine. I wish that every one of you reading this book could experience the peace and love I did on that day and other times along my journey when I have felt it. I view these random epiphanies as a glimpse of heaven. I am thankful for a friend, Dave, who boldly kept telling me about the reality of the Christian faith even when, at times, I tried to push him away. What I came to realize is that my previous state of belief was faulty, and that life is more than theories or concepts that people try to create. I am not a life form that came about from some haphazard explosions in the universe — detonations that just happened to allow 30 trillion cells to combine in just the right way, to not only form my life, but to allow me to have the complex feelings and emotions that I have. Let’s be real: how could this all happen by itself?

What if you are wrong? I can tell you right now that I know that God loves you. Through His love, I can also say that I love you and that I want you to have the best in this life. Living life thinking that maybe

someday scientists will prove how life came into existence or believing that we came into being through a black hole that blew up, or were planted here by aliens — or whatever it is that you may believe in regards to a theory that does not involve God — there is more than what you realize. I was numbered in your ranks and felt that science had all the answers. To be honest with you, I still believe that science does have the answers, but I do not see a Creator disengaged from science, but a God who is the answer for science. Science is not a god, but only a system of thinking designed to determine how things exist and function. Science is not a living thing, while God is a living Being who wants the very best for you. So, if you are wrong, that means you are a created being from the hand of a loving God who has planned for and placed you on this planet. You are not an arbitrary product of nature; rather, you have been brought into existence to live a life of significance and purpose, and with an eternal destiny set before you. The question is where would you want to spend this eternity?

What do you have to lose by checking more deeply into Christianity and doing an analysis of what the Bible says? How about rather than listening to what other people say about it, try to find out for yourself the reality of a Christian life.

In the Bible there is a parable of a rich man and a poor man who is given the name “Lazarus” (Luke 16:19–31). In this story, the rich man lives in great luxury in a gated community. Every day is a party for him and a celebration of who he is and what he has. There was also a poor man named Lazarus

who had nothing but terrible sores all over his body. He would stand at the gate of the rich man hoping for any scraps of food that would be brought out to be thrown away. He had to compete with the dogs to get any scraps. It so happens that both die. Lazarus, even though he had not much in the way of earthly possession had something of great importance: he had faith in God. After his death he finds himself in heaven living in complete joy and happiness and in the presence of Abraham who is considered the earthly father of Judeo-Christianity. Even though the rich man had numerous worldly possessions, he lacked what was most important. While on earth he chose to reject God and now finds himself in agony away from the presence of God. It is important to note that this parable is a story that has a deeper meaning and is not exactly a depiction of what heaven and hell would be like. There is a chasm between heaven and hell, and the rich man can see Lazarus and Abraham across this abyss. He calls out to Abraham asking him to send Lazarus to give him relief because of the agony he was experiencing in hell. Abraham informs the rich man (whose riches now mean nothing) that between heaven and hell is a barrier, and those in heaven cannot cross over to hell, and those in hell cannot cross over to heaven. The rich man then says words of concern and compassion from hell as he makes another request of Abraham. He says, "Abraham, I have five brothers still on earth, please send Lazarus to them so that they will not have to come to this place of torment". Abraham makes it clear that when people are in

heaven they cannot go back to earth. What Abraham says to the rich man is, "Your brothers have the Word of God" to learn from. The rich man indicates that maybe if someone like Lazarus comes back from the dead, his brothers would believe. Abraham stated that they probably won't believe even if someone rises from the dead. Jesus (who shares this parable) refers to himself since He knew in advance that he would rise from the dead.

The reason I am writing this book is because I am one who wants the five brothers of Lazarus to know the truth. If you are an agnostic or atheist, no matter who you are, I care about you and want you to experience a life that has more to offer than you now realize. If you are still reading and have not thrown the book across the room in anger, I commend you for having an open mind and for hanging in there to this point. I will be the first to admit that I do not understand all the ways of God or why things happen the way they do. God is mysterious even to me, and this is made clear in his Word.

Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" For from him and through him and for him are all things (Romans 11:33–36).

There are many questions I have that I would like to ask God in person. What I know is that He is God, and I am not. I also believe, like you, that you have to make the most out

of the life you have, and I can honestly say my life has been far better since I have come to know Him. An important thing I have come to realize is that “the less you fear death, the freer you are to live.” I have no fear of death, because death is not a reality in my life. I believe there is life now and an even better life when this one is over. Death is a door to the next life and that is the reality of my belief

system. I have no doubts about this. Again Hebrews 11:1 it says, “Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see”. I am reassured by this certainty, and I view it as a gift from God. It is also a gift that He wants you to have. In the next chapter, I, too, would like to share more about how this gift can be yours.

CHAPTER 10

The Gift Is Free

Whenever we hear the phrase “free gift”, we usually start thinking, “There has to be an angle to this.” How many times do you get phone calls or the emails talking about a free vacation. My wife at that time and I responded to one of those advertisements for a free trip. All we had to do was attend a short meeting to hear about a time share option. We attended the meeting as the sales director put the hardest push on us to buy the product. It was a painful meeting. When we told him we were not interested in his product, he used a ‘guilt trip’ on us and chewed us out for wasting his time and taking advantage of him. The whole experience was not very good, and the ‘free vacation’ was not anything that it was cracked up to be.

Today, as I write this chapter, my dad just received a mailing from a company that promised to give him five free grams of silver. All he had to do was pay around ten dollars for postage. He got his free five grams, but

when he did the math, the silver was worth five dollars and in reality, the free deal cost him five dollars. We become very skeptical about the idea of something free.

We are people who are used to working for what we get. You work so many hours and you get so much pay. You do this, and you get that. For most people that is how it works. I can understand why people are drawn to religions with the same type of philosophy because that is what we are used to. I can understand why a religion like Islam may be appealing to people. If you are told, all you must do is the five tenants of Islam, one would think, “I can do that.” I can observe the Holy days, give alms to the poor, make a journey to Mecca, pray five times a day, and recite continually, “There is no God but Allah and Mohamed is his prophet.” These are doable things. The “do” religions make sense to us because we are so used doing something in order to get something in return.

Yet this is what the Bible says about the gift of salvation.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8–9).

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23–24).

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)

These are just a few of the many verses in the Bible that make a common point. The gift that God offers to the world is free and not only is it free but leads those who receive it to freedom in this life and forever. Many people mistakenly believe that Christianity leads people into bondage and burdens its followers a lot of ‘does’ and ‘don’ts’. What many do not realize is that it is sin or living outside the bonds of love that leads people into bondage. People become enslaved by wrong choices and messed up thinking. The journey of the Christian is learning to use

one’s free will to live in love; it is a journey toward freedom that draws people away from fear and bondage. Imagine a world in which people truly lived in love for one another and even put others before themselves. I believe this is an attitude that has helped to make America great, especially when we consider the sacrifices so many have made to allow us to have the freedoms that we enjoy in here. Sacrifice leads to freedom and this sacrifice is made by people who put others above themselves. Great sacrifice is the equivalent to great love, and where there is great sacrifice and love, one will find freedom. This is the foundation of the Christian faith. Even if this would be practiced in principle alone, it leads to a world of hope and purpose. Reality for the Christian is that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice when He gave his life on a cross to pay the penalty of our sin (our inability to love as we should); and that we would find forgiveness and not only a better life here on earth, but through his resurrection, a life that would last forever. The freedom that the God of Christianity offers is one that lasts forever. There are no strings attached but is offered freely to be received. The God of Christianity is not a deity who is distant or far away, but one who is involved in this world. He is not a God who micromanages, but a God who desires to inspire His followers to not only believe in the grace and gift of salvation He offers, but also to use our free will to make the decision to live in love for Him, ourselves and others.

Imagine, for a moment — even if you have a hard time grasping the words that I have just shared — that they are really true, that

there is a God who created you and this universe who loves you unconditionally, and always has. He has not only given you your life but also your family, friends, a place to live, talents, abilities, resources and the energy to sustain your life. He has asked of those He has created to live in love for Him and others. Unfortunately, we have too often not chosen to go that route. He has made available an eternal place called heaven where perfect love can be experienced for all eternity — a place where there are sights, sounds, dimensions, and experiences that go far beyond what this life has to offer. It is a place God wants for all those He has created, but not through coercion or force.

Through His intervention in history by coming into this world in human form, He lived the perfect life of love, died on a cross to experience death in our place, and then rose to overcome death for us. All He asks of us is that we believe in what He has done and receive the grace He offers us. In so doing we are offered a wonderful life here, but an eternal life that will far exceed any possible expectations we could ever imagine in our limited viewpoint on this planet. And what would such a gift be worth? Could it be worth even more than all the money this transitory world has to offer? This is the gift that God offers to you for eternity, and it is free to be received.

If you have not received this gift in your life, God offers it to you freely right now. He is a God who is tuned into us all the time and is tuned into you right now. He wants his children to talk with Him, and He loves to

answer our conversation (prayers) in ways that are best for us and His creation. If you are not sure what to pray, I would like to give you a prayer that you could pray right now, and I believe that God will hear and answer you. You can pray this out loud or you can do it silently in your heart knowing that He hears you either way.

I invite you to pray the following prayer and I encourage you to pray these words with meaning.

Dear God, I want to get to know you on a deeper level. I am not sure what I should believe, but I ask your help in leading me to believe what you want me to. I admit that I have made mistakes in my life and have not lived in love toward you, others and even myself as I should. I realize that I do not have the ability to take my own sins away, so I humbly ask you to remove them from me through the gift of forgiveness you have offered through the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus. I ask that your Spirit would open up my heart and mind to believe in you, Jesus. Help me to become aware of your continuous presence as the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and help me to grow in a deeper relationship with you and your eternal love. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer and sense the presence of God becoming a deeper part in your life, I encourage you to find a Bible-believing Christian Church where you can continue to grow in this faith journey. No matter who you are, your journey through life may have greater significance than you

ever imagined. What sounds better for you — being on a journey that lasts only as long as you live on this planet, or one that has eternal significance? If I can assist you in this journey in a personal way, please check out the following website scottsdalehohycross.org and feel free to contact me directly. I am so excited about this very important eternal step you are taking in your life.

CHAPTER 11

Why Should I Trust What the Bible Says?

I recently saw a sign, generated by a group called Atheists.org, attacking the belief systems of two presidential candidates. The sign, which read: “Sadistic God, useless Savior, 30,000 plus versions of truth, promotes hate but calls it love.” Strong words to be sure, but they are the antithesis of the God I have come to know in the Bible. Have you ever known someone really well, and then heard people saying things that describe the person in a way that is totally contrary to your perception of him or her? That is how I feel about the depiction of the words on the billboard published by Atheists.org that is incompatible with the God of Christianity whom I have come to know. I have also heard the rhetoric of many communicating a depiction of the God of Christianity which is so different than how I know Him.

As one reads through the Bible it is true that he or she will encounter sadistic, inept and incompetent people who are just as messed up as those we may encounter in modern times. It becomes very clear that despite technological advances and the passage of centuries, people are still fundamentally the same. The Bible, which has been proven to be accurate historically archaeologically, chronologically, and I believe, scientifically, is also accurate anthropologically. The Bible is a history of human failures and about a God who continues loving the crown of his creation, human beings, despite their imperfections. From the very beginning you encounter Adam and Even who are incapable of following the simple instructions that God gave to them. Then their firstborn son murdered their second

born son out of jealousy. The one who became Father Abraham lied twice to kings of various regions who found his wife Sarah to be very attractive. Then there was Jacob who stole his brother's birthright only to be followed by his own sons who sold their own brother, Joseph, into slavery. These are just a few of the main characters in the Book of Genesis and there are sixty-five books that follow that one. Still, despite this history of human failure, we see a God who does not micromanage all the details that happen, but helps people discover good things in bad situations, showing them guidance for finding love and forgiveness.

It seems that the consequence of bad behavior by people in the Bible is often borne on God's shoulders. I suppose God could have made humanity perfect and denied humans free will, but the obvious question remains, "What kind of a world would that be?" It would be a perfect world where everything would go right all the time; but, without free will it would also be a world of puppets on a string. There are many differing ways in which God could have made this world, but when you examine the way He created this one, you cannot help but realize it is rather interesting. People have a free will and they choose the direction that they want to go. It is obvious in our makeup that every one of us at times makes decisions that are so misguided that we may sometimes even surprise ourselves. At times we make decisions to show love and respect to others. We live a highly interactive lives interrelated to the lives of all those around us. We can make this world a better place,

have no impact at all, or make things worse. We have the right to reject God and, in so doing, choose to live our lives separate from Him, or we could be led to believe in Him and strive to live our lives in a direction focused more on love for Him and others.

Yet even those who believe can be prone to live in a way that may not reflect Christian love. The Apostle Paul, one of the greatest heroes in the New Testament and considered to be the most successful missionary, stated, *"I do not do the good that I want to do, no the evil that I do not want to do this I keep on doing"* (Romans 7:19). The Bible is indeed a history of human struggles, while at the same time a history of people who chose to follow God's ways. They were empowered to do things that, by human standards, were absolutely amazing. I realize that some of the things stated in the Bible may be hard for the average person to believe. Things like Noah building an Ark, Jonah being swallowed by a large fish, and Daniel surviving his encounter in a lion's den, may be hard to wrap our rational minds around, but, I will take it even a step further.

I believe in a God I have neither seen nor heard. I believe that He created me and all that exists. I believe He has given me my family, friends, talents, abilities and the possessions that I have. I believe what He has done for me is a gift that could only have come from His intervention in my life. I believe in a Savior named Jesus Christ who, when He lived on this planet, healed the sick, raised people from the dead, cast out evil spirits, controlled the weather,

was all knowing, and could see into the future. In His thirty-three years of life He never sinned or made a mistake; and, from age thirty until his death, He carried on a three-year ministry that literally changed the direction of our world. He was put on trial by the people of the church who were supposed to represent Him and was found guilty of claiming to be a heavenly king. He suffered the agony of crucifixion (a most painful method of execution used by the Carthaginians and Romans), and after being dead for three days, rose from the dead, and today is present everywhere, seeing and hearing all things. Because of who He is and what He has done, I believe that I am forgiven despite the mistakes I have made in my life, and will one day go to a place I have never seen — a place called heaven, where I will live eternally in a state of existence that will far exceed even the best things I have encountered in this life. If you look rationally at what I believe, you might think I am irrational because I talk to, and believe in, an imaginary person. Yet, I do not have the slightest doubt about what I believe or about what the Bible teaches. My faith is steadfast because I believe in a God of love who can do anything.

That is the belief the Bible talks about. Admittedly, in the past I have questioned the accuracy of the Bible, but now having come to faith, I believe that God's Word is true. I have read through the Bible countless times and as the years go by, it makes more sense to me. My original intent in studying the Word was to find fault with it; I now see no Biblical faults, but do see imperfections in myself that can be improved by living a Christian life. Despite my frailties, I still feel fully accepted and loved by God; but I am on a perpetual journey to learn and understand more about what the Bible says. I pray daily for the strength to put God's Word into action in every facet of my life. I do this not because I have to, but because I want to. There are sections of the Bible I still have a hard time understanding; additionally, there are aspects of God's nature that are still a mystery to me. I do not know everything about God, but I am learning more as I journey through life by making a concerted effort to understand His Word. I believe there is much more that I will learn when I leave this world behind and one day enter an eternity with God in heaven. I do not consider myself an expert on God, but I do believe He is an expert on understanding me and everyone else.

Tough Questions

I have heard atheists and agnostics attack sections of the Bible with which I, even as a pastor, have had to wrestle. I will present some of them here.

Why would a loving God cause bad things to happen in this life?

This is a question that people have struggled with for centuries. It is one that has been, at times, difficult for me to understand. Still when I look back over my life, I have found that I have grown more as a person through difficult times than I have through the good times. What I have also come to realize is that most of the struggles that are experienced in life are not caused by God. Most problems in this life are caused by the bad decisions we make. Let's say a person drinks and drives yet survives after crashing into another vehicle, killing three people. Did God cause that problem? One might argue that God did not stop the event from happening, or that He allowed it to happen. My view is that the individual chose to use free will, and his/her decision to drive while intoxicated impacted the lives of others in a tragic way.

What about the terrible things that Adolph Hitler did during World War II? Why didn't God stop the Holocaust from happening? Again, I believe that we have a God who is not a micromanaging everything that happens on this planet. During WWII an evil man was able to lead many others into

believing that certain groups of people were inferior and did not deserve to inhabit this planet. As bad as the Holocaust was, just imagine what would have happened if the allies had not defeated Hitler. Could it be that God helped other groups of people rise up to defeat the evil that had invaded this world? The God of Christianity and the Bible is a God who has chosen to do His work through people. How many more millions would have been wiped off the face of the earth if Adolf Hitler had been victorious? When you study the history of that time, it is scary to think how close this evil dictator came to winning. It is evident that evil in this world proliferates because of decisions people make that are outside the bounds of love.

What about sicknesses that are incurable or natural disasters that take lives? The Bible is clear in stating that not only is there a side of human existence that is prone to sin and living outside the bonds of love, but that we live on a planet that is impacted by imperfection as well.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:22–23). Our world is decaying, and things like storms, hurricanes,

tsunamis, earthquakes, diseases, germs and health problems all can be explained scientifically. It is not God inflicting these things on people. He is not a God who sits up in heaven and propels lightning bolts at us. He has allowed for things to be the way they are, but he does not intercede and control every occurrence on earth. Terrible things happen in an imperfect world, and atheists and agnostics best understand this. Yet, they continually offer scientific and human (rather than Divine) reasons to explain why events happen. The problem is that there are even Christians who do not understand how God works, and consequently attribute every detail of their lives to Him. When terrible things happen, they may make the claim, "It was God's will". Was the holocaust God's will? Was the family that was wiped out by a drunk driver God's will? Was the person killed by a tornado a victim of God's will? The God I know is not a sadist. In Jeremiah 29:11 God makes the following clear: "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" declares the Lord, "*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*"

I also know of a God who works through the tragedies of life and does not abandon those He has made. When it comes to the difficult situations that we face in this life, one of two things is going to happen. We are either going to get "bitter" or "better." Difficulties will make us move one way or the other and we have all recognized this in life. God's desire is that the challenges will make us better. Open your mind to the following verses from the Bible.

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Romans 5:3–5).

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword? As it is written, "for your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:28, 35–39).

From these sections of the Bible does it indicate that we have a God who inflicts terrible things on people? It is true He could stop things from happening if He wanted to, and there may be times when this happens. I have experienced times when some people make a miraculous recovery from a disease while others die of the same condition. I do not understand why some things happen the way they do; still, I have come to know a God who is with us through the good times and the bad, the happy times and the sad. I have experienced His presence even more during difficult times, and through

challenges of life I have recognized my human limits. Most important is that I recognize His unlimited power and love.

Let's imagine for a moment that I find out that I have a severe illness that has the potential to take my life. What are my options? One option would be that I seek good medical treatment, my body heals, and I again become well. That would be a good outcome.

Another option would be that my illness progresses, and I begin to experience physical pain and discomfort. This may seem like a bad outcome, but the reality is that as a Christian I believe that *All things work together for the good for those who love the Lord* (Romans 8:28). I also know that difficult times can help me develop perseverance, character and hope (Romans 5:3–5). Even in difficult circumstances, great things can happen. There have been numerous times during my life that people in difficult situations have inspired me because of their faith. Even as I write this section, I just received a text informing me that one of the dear members of our church, John Bradshaw, passed away. Just a week ago I sat with John and his wife in their home. He knew that he did not have much time to live and that his days were short; still, he was not afraid, was confident in his faith, and looked forward to seeing the Lord. We talked and all shared communion together; and, when I left their home, I felt that John touched my life in a much more powerful way during that visit than I did his.

A third outcome would be that the illness would take my life. In our worldly perception, this would seem like a terrible outcome. Still, as a Christian, it would be the greatest outcome for me, because at the moment of my death, my soul would go to be with the Lord in heaven. The faith that my God has secured for me in my life will have been fulfilled in the greatest victory anyone could experience. Victory over death! It makes sense to me when the apostle Paul thought he would soon die, and said, *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but this, I know that I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith* (Philippians 1:21–25). The reality is that victory can be found by the Christian in all three scenarios.

There is a problem with asking the question, “How could a loving God cause terrible things to happen in this world?”. The question should be “Why does a loving God allow for bad things to happen in this world?” The question should be “Why does a loving God allow for bad things to happen in this world?” What we have is a highly interactive life in which we have freedom to choose our path and who or what we interact with. We also have the choice to choose how we react to the challenges we face in this life. While many may choose to become “bitter” because of the challenges and difficulties in life, others can choose to get “better”

and find hope and victory even in the most difficult situations. The question I now raise is this, “Are bad things really that bad, when there is a God who can bring good out of any situation?”

To understand the beauty of great things happening, you must be able to compare it with bad things. If you want to appreciate the splendor of a mountain the best place to observe is often from the valley below. I realize that there are many mysteries in life, and I am not trying to trivialize this topic, but I believe that we can rejoice in the bad times. We know that good times are ahead, and we have a God who will be there with us during the good and bad.

Why is There So Much Violence, especially in the Old Testament and How Can a God of Love Allow for This?

I have heard this question time and again, not just by those who are secular, but also by Christians. I, too, have struggled with this topic. However, if you closely examine the cultures of that time and closely read the Scripture texts, some things will jump out at you. For example, if you read through the book of Judges, you will find many verses describing a particular battle or even a number of chapters talking about a certain judge who ruled Israel. Then in one verse you will read the phrase “Then there was forty years of peace,” or “Then there was eighty years of peace.” When you think about this, when was the last time our country experienced forty or eighty years of peace? It is believed by some that more people died in the battles and political

upheavals of the 20th century than in all prior human existence. While there is violence in the Bible, I believe it was sinful human beings that brought it about. While small portions of the Old Testament seem very violent to me, I see in the teachings of Jesus a theme that if someone was to hit you on one cheek turn the other to him as well.

If God Created Everything Good, then Why is There Evil?

God did create everything good, but he still gave human beings the free will to make their own choices. When people choose to do things that are contrary to God’s will, this constitutes evil. Evil emerges from the misuse of free will. It is the absence of good, and ultimately, the absence of love. God did not cause evil to happen, but He allowed humans to use their free will to do what is good; thus, it is caused by mankind and the spiritual forces of evil that are in this world.

An example of this can be found in the whole realm of the devil or of demons. The Bible indicates that the devil and his demons are fallen angels. At one time they lived in the will of God and for some reason chose to rebel and live outside His will. It is obvious that God even gave these angels free will to choose which way they would turn. Since they chose to turn away from God they choose to do what is evil. Evil is operating outside the bounds of God’s will. Unfortunately, it is a choice made by humans that most often leads to the terrible things we experience in life.

Another way to understand this is to understand darkness. Darkness is the absence of light. In the same way, evil is the absence of love — and since God is love — evil is the absence of God. I must admit that there are a number of questions that I would love to ask God directly when I see Him some day. I do not understand why Satan and the angels who followed him rebelled. The only hint we get is that Satan had a big ego and desired to become greater than God. In Isaiah 14:12–15 we catch a glimpse of this egotistical nature of Satan:

How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I still ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will

make myself like the Most High. But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. (emphasis on the pronoun “I”).

The reality is that evil is a very self-centered state of existence in which the will of self supersedes anything or anyone else. Love is the exact opposite of evil. Love puts others before self. What we have with evil is a clear antithesis of what we have with love. Could it be that God has allowed evil so that we can more deeply understand the power of love? Notice I did not say that He created evil, but that He allowed evil. The reality is that God is love (I John 4:16). Evil is caused when created beings live outside the bounds of love and therefore evil is a choice that is made by those who choose to use their free will to venture outside the bounds of love.

The Wall

Albert Einstein was the scientist who came up with the famous formula, $E=MC^2$. What this formula indicates is that the amount of energy is equal to the mass of the object times the speed of light squared. Many people believe that if we could develop a way to move faster than the speed of light, then we could actually travel in time. The problem is that we are not able to surpass the speed of light because of the great amount of energy needed to do so and the increase in mass creates a wall that seems insurmountable at this time in our history. Many believe such a feat is humanly impossible. Therefore, a wall is there that prevents the ability to travel in time.

The evolutionists have a wall that is also insurmountable. Here is the problem. If we came into existence through a big bang that started from a black hole — from where did the black hole emerge? If we were planted here by aliens — where did they come from? No matter what the theory or idea they come up with regarding the origin of the universe and life, it still comes down to, how did the

original building blocks of their theory come into being? Was there always something out there? Since the universe is expanding, where was the starting point and what was in existence prior to that? Scientists cannot get past that wall.

As much as secular scientists may cringe at the idea of a God who created the heavens and the earth, at least a theory is being presented as to how something came out of nothing. Then they may ask, “Where did your God come from?” Our belief is that He always has been in existence and has the power to create as He chooses. For those of us who believe in Him, He is the source of the big bang. He is the one who can organize chaos into order. He can organize thirty trillion cells into a complex human form. What is impossible for man to do or comprehend is possible for Him to do. Which theory makes more sense? One that has a wall or one that does not?

The Depravity of Mankind

It is believed that nearly one million Tutsis were murdered by the Hutus in the Rwanda massacre in 1994. What is so hard to understand is how people in neighborhoods turned on, and murdered, their own neighbors because they were of a differing ethnic group. The Hutu leaders were trying to desensitize other Hutus by saying that the Tutsis were “cockroaches” that needed to be stamped out. Tens of thousands of men, women and children were hacked and beaten to death by mobs of blood-thirsty Hutus while the world stood back and watched. If this would have taken place in an oil rich country, would the world have gotten involved then?

If you were to follow the stories in the aftermath of this terrible slaughter, it is amazing the amount of reconciliation that has taken place between the Tutsis and the Hutus. The Tutsis were eventually able to stop the slaughter and bring to justice many of the ring leaders of the Hutus who led the rebellion. The Tutsi tribe, mainly Christian, had to start their lives again with nearly every one of them having had immediate family members, relatives and neighbors, murdered. They had to live in neighborhoods again with Hutus, the very tribesmen who were involved in the massacre of their loved ones. What is amazing is the number of stories of forgiveness of the Tutsis to the Hutus, a forgiveness that seems to go beyond human capability. Once again in power in Rwanda,

they could have wiped out the Hutus or at least put to death or imprisoned everyone who had any involvement. Were you to check deeply into this aftermath, you would encounter hundreds of amazing stories of forgiveness and reconciliation.

What we see in this historical event is two things. There was an appalling depravity of the human condition that led to the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people just because they were of a different ethnicity. Then there is the story of human compassion and forgiveness that was granted by the Tutsis to the Hutus because they felt this is what God would want them to do and indeed empowered them to do.

Have you noticed that since that terrible slaughter there has not been civil war in Rwanda; in fact, there has been very little news at all because the two groups have been able to begin reconciling even after such a terrible massacre.

This story indicates two differing sides to the human condition: one side that is very evil and the other that is very noble. I believe these two aspects of existence are at war within every human being.

If you are honest with yourself, do you find there are things that you have thought, done and said in your life that crossed the line between right and wrong, regardless of the context in which you define these opposites.

There is a spiritual battle that is raging all around us, and the Bible addresses it. Ephesians 6 talks about this battle in detail.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his might power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. . . . And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should (Ephesians 6:10–13, 16–20).

How do we deal with this battle raging around us? Four times Paul says “pray”. Prayer is communicating and connecting with the God who has won the victory of sin, Satan and death. Nothing is impossible for this God and nothing can defeat Him. Through our God the forces of evil are ultimately defeated. There are still battles that are being fought, but the war has already been won. If you truly want to find victory in this life and forever, the key is to humble and submit your life to the God who created and loves you.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you (James 4:7-8).

If our desire is to escape the depravity of evil in this world, the answer is to cling closely to the God of love. My prayer is that your journey in this life will be steered in a direction that will lead you to come to know more about the God of the Universe and away from thought process that concludes: all that we are and have is the result of cosmic dust.

RESOURCES

For Further Study

WEBSITES

Institute for Creation Research

icr.org

Answers In Genesis

answersingenesis.org

YOUTUBE

[Does God Exist?](#)

(Frank Turek vs. Christopher Hitchens)

[Frank Turek's Cross Examined Channel](#)

[The God Delusion Debate](#)

Richard Dawkins vs John Lennox

BOOKS

I Do Not Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist

by Norman Geisler and Frank Turek

Evident that Demands a Verdict

by Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell

More Than A Carpenter

by Josh McDowell

Case For Christ

(and others in the "Case for ..." series)

by Lee Strobel