

Arguments For The Existence Of God

"Can man live without God? Of course he can, in a physical sense. Can he live without God in a reasonable way? No! Because such a person is compelled to deny moral law, to abandon hope, to forfeit meaning, and to risk no recovery if he is wrong. Life just offers too much evidence to the contrary." (Zacharias)

• Arguments From Meaning:

Paul's Letter: (Mars Hill, "The Question")

Dear Will,

I am writing to explain what I have decided to do. If you can understand, then maybe you won't blame me. And then maybe you can help Mom and Dad understand that I don't really blame them either.

Some people will say that I couldn't cope with the pressure of college, that I was flunking out and couldn't handle failure. Some people will say that I couldn't handle it when I lost Karen to another guy. They'll say I couldn't stand on my own feet, that I couldn't deal with rejection. Some people will say that I drank too much. But if that's true, then so do half of the people I know.

*I'll be the first to admit that I've really screwed up my life, but that's not the real problem. **The real problem is there's no reason to fix it.** Believe me, I've searched for one, but somehow I have come face-to-face with life and **it is meaningless and empty.** We have all been sold some kind of promise about success and happiness; so we work our tails off so we can live in the right kind of house, in the right kind of neighborhood, drive the right kind of car, take the right kind of vacation, and send our kids to the right kind of school, so they can grow up and do the same thing all over again. But it's all a stupid, empty lie. It's as if our life is a movie; images fade in and out, people come and go; but when the movie is finished, all that's left is an empty screen - a big zero - nothing!*

*We are all just a highly evolved bundle of dust. We're born, we live, and we die. And in between we do the best we can to fill the emptiness, with people and things (mostly things). And maybe for a moment we can avoid the emptiness, fooling ourselves into thinking it isn't there. But it doesn't work, not in the long run. You can see it in people all around you. They're hollow, just existing. They're marching toward a mirage, but they never get there. They just keep marching. I seem to be repeating myself, and really, I am so disgusted with repetition. It's a waste, and it all comes down to one question: **Is there a reason to choose living (it that's what you want to call it) over dying? Is there a reason to prolong this meaningless existence?***

*Your brother,
Paul.*

Ultimate questions:

- Does God exist?
- Where did I come from?
- What is the purpose of the universe?
- What is the meaning and purpose of life? Why are we here?
- Why am I here? What significance does my life have?
- Where am I going? To what end is human history moving?
- What or who am I? Do I have a soul? Am I more than just matter?
- What is the purpose and value of humanity?
- Is there life after death? Is there any hope?
- Why isn't suicide an option to life's pain and suffering?
- Who ultimately says?
- Why should I care? Why should I get up in the morning?

Three Views Concerning Meaning (Explaining life without God)

1. Nihilism

Life is absurd/meaningless - party on
Suicide is an option/justifiable anarchy
"If God is dead... do what ever you please..."
Result - despair/hopelessness/selfishness

2. Optimistic Humanism

You can make life meaningful to you... even though it is meaningless and empty... pursue your own happiness.
Result - self-delusion/subjective reality/denial of meaninglessness

3. Transcendentalism

Even though life seems meaningless... be good!
Result - Why? (law without a lawgiver)
Life becomes unlivable.
Why should I do anything but pursue my own happiness?

Ecclesiastes:

- 1:2 "Meaningless! Everything is meaningless..."
1:3 "What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils...?"
1:8 "All things are wearisome, more than one can say..."
1:9 "There is nothing new under the sun."
2:10 "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure."
2:11 "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything is meaningless, a chasing after the wind..."
2:17 "So I hated life... all of it is meaningless..."
2:18 "I hated all the things I toiled for..."
2:20 "So my heart began to despair..."
2:25 "... for without (God), who can ... find enjoyment?
(Life makes no sense without God!)"
2:26 To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, & happiness."
3:11 "He has set eternity in the hearts of men..."
3:14 "Everything God does will endure forever... God does it so that men will revere (seek) him..."
3:17 "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked."
4:2 "The dead who had already died, are happier than the living who are still alive..."

- 4:4 "All achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor... this too is meaningless - chasing after the wind..."
- 4:8 "There was a man all alone; there was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth... this too is meaningless - a miserable business."
- 5:10 "Whoever loves money never has money enough, whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income, as goods increase, so do those who consume them... this too is meaningless."
- 6:7,8 "All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied. What advantage has a wise man over a fool?"
- 7:29 "God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes."
- 12:1 "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth..."
- 12:13,14 "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

Christianity - The purpose of life is based on the Nature of God and His relationship with His creation.

Purpose of the Universe/Earth:

- to glorify God (Ps. 19:1)
- for man to enjoy (Is. 45:18; Gen. 1:28)

Human Worth:

- purpose- (Is. 43:7; Deut. 6:5; 10:12,13; Phil. 2:13)
- unique image bearers- (Genesis 1:26,27; Ja. 3:9)
- plan- (Acts 17:26,27)
- created with value- (Ps. 8:4-8; Ps. 139:13-16)

Human Destiny:

- history of God's redemption of mankind
- destiny - reward or judgment/heaven or hell
(Matt. 25:32,41,46; 2 Thess. 1:8,9)
- hope - (Rom. 8:28, 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Values:

- based in the character of God- (1 Pet. 1:15,16; Gal. 5:22,23; Heb. 1:3)

Why Be Moral?

- absolute right/wrong (Law)
- accountability- (1 Cor. 5:10)
- reward/punishment- (1 Cor. 4:4,5)
- bring God glory-(1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:9; Ecc. 12:13,14; Eph. 2:10)

• Argument From Morality

What does it mean to be moral?

Webster: "conforming to a standard of right and good behavior"
 "expressing concepts of right behavior"
 "operative on one's conscience"

Key Ethical Questions:

1. What is good? Can man define "good" or "right" without God?
2. Why should I be moral? Who says? Who is my authority?
 On what basis can you say anything is right or wrong?
 Which standard do you refer to?

3. If my happiness is a right and the ultimate goal of my life, why should I worry about another's claims to happiness?
4. If life is pointless, why should ethics serve any purpose except my own?
5. If I am merely the product of matter, why should I subject myself to anyone else's moral convictions?
6. If there is no objective moral reference point, how can anyone condemn anyone else's choices or behavior?
7. If morality is relative and just personal opinion, then why have moral education? (values clarification?)
8. How do we deal with moral disagreement? Moral duty? ("ought" or moral responsibility/obligation)
9. Where do you draw the line between good and bad? How do you know which is which?
10. What are the consequences of something not being what it ought to be?
11. If God does not exist, do objective moral values exist which are true for all people and binding?
12. What is wrong with the world? What's wrong with mankind in particular?

Moral Relativism (I say)(rubber band –v- ruler morality)

Moral Relativism is the belief that moral values which govern an individual or society are relative and that right and wrong is dictated by each situation (situational ethics) and each culture. Those who hold this view believe there is no reasonable or rational way by which to make moral distinctions that apply to everyone. They believe there are no universal independent moral values which transcend culture and which bind one's conscience or behavior.

"It is only my personal opinion..."

"Of course I am not judging anyone's behavior..."

"If you think it's all right, that's great for you, but I'm personally against it..."

Judges 17:6; 21:25 "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Isaiah 5:20,23 "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil... who justify the wicked... and take away justice from the righteous man."

Ezekiel 22:16 "they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; They teach there is no difference between the unclean and clean."

Proverbs 17:15 "acquitting the guilty, condemning the innocent."(Amos 5:7)

Romans 1:21,22,28-32

Flaws With Relativism:

- Morality becomes just a matter of personal taste, preference, likes/dislikes, one's opinion, what is convenient, or socially advantageous at the time. It does nothing to qualify/prove something objectively right or wrong. Rules become arbitrary. Law becomes meaningless. "Why should I obey your opinion?"
- You can't accuse someone of wrongdoing. There is no real difference between one who is guilty and one who is innocent. One cannot blame or accept praise since there is no standard which defines what should be applauded or condemned. Nothing is ultimately bad/deplorable or good/noble/honorable.

- There is no such thing as the problem of evil. Evil as a value judgment marks a departure from some standard of moral perfection. Evil shouldn't bother you.
- One cannot make statements that something is unfair or unjust since there is no moral requirement to be just or fair. If nothing is ultimately immoral. There is no blame and subsequently no guilt worthy of punishment.
- What is moral progress? One cannot improve or reform one's morality, one can only change it. There is no such thing as something better. There would be no motivation to improve it. There would be no sense in preferring one over another.
- Moral discussions or comparing one view with another becomes meaningless since neither can be better or judged to be deficient, barbaric, or acceptable.
- There can be no tolerance since there is no moral obligation to tolerate one over another. Tolerance presupposes "ought's" & one is right.
 - * I (morally) ought to tolerate the moral opinions and behavior of others who disagree or differ from me...
 - * I (morally) should not try to interfere with other's opinions or behavior since we are all right...
 - * "Shouldn't you (morally) be tolerant of my intolerance?"
- A standard which measures between two things must be independent of either thing being compared. (transcendent)
- "To not harm or affect others" ≠ inner character. Just because someone does what is socially acceptable, does not follow they are "good" by nature (compliant).
- If I am just a product of my environment acting on instinct, how can I be held responsible for my behavior?
- There is a great difference between how men behave and how men "ought" to behave. Why ought I to be _____? It is not an issue of just being good for society. Why should I care unless it benefits me personally?
- We have basic human desires (sexual, hunger, family, love, self-preservation, compassion). There is no "always good" instinct. Many times we must go against our natural instinct and choose to do the right thing (what I feel I want to do –v- what I ought to/should do). There needs to be a balance between love/mercy and justice.

Cultural Relativism (We say)

Cultural Relativism states that different societies have distinct and fundamentally different ethics (rules of conduct). Since cultures and individuals differ in certain moral practices, there are no objective universal values. Normative relativism states everyone should act in accordance with his own society's code. (norm/Majority rule)

Right is defined as ...

- that which is beneficial for the heard
(solidarity/brotherhood of man/greatest good)
- that which is reciprocal (the golden rule)
- that which does not harm
- that which is loving
- that which is fair

- that which is reasonable and decent

Problem: Who defines what is...?

How does survival of the fittest fit with moral ought's, compassion, protecting the weak, truth, responsibility?

Law is a reflection of a society's conclusions on morality. Laws are do's or don'ts designed to protect people's rights, public order, and dispense justice.

Foundation: socio-biological adaptation/evolution (basic herd instincts)

Argument Against Cultural Relativism:

- Although cultures and individuals differ in moral practices, there are widespread common values. (honesty/courage/protect innocent)
- What "is" can be confused with what "ought" or ought not to be.
- What is the definition of "society"?
- Who sets the "norm" or standard? (social conditioning)
- What happens when an individual is part of different societies?
What happens when two different herd instincts collide?
What happens when the individual and the herd instincts differ?
With moral disagreement, which one is right? Which do you obey?
- There would be no morality where there were no cultures.
- There could be no immoral societies.
- There would be no immoral laws.
- This confused what is right with what is legal. Social law is not always moral and may change.
- The majority is not always right. (L.A. riots, anarchy-French Revolution)
- Some acts are wrong regardless of social ethics.
(Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jews/Nuremberg Trials)
- It is impossible to be a moral reformer and change a society's ethical code. (Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King) Reformers become immoral in their mission to try to improve another society.
- It is impossible to disagree or criticize another culture.
(Bosnia, China, polygamy in Utah, North Korea, Iran)
- What is the point of moral education? (value clarification)
- Differing, opposing viewpoints can't be equally correct.
- "If God is dead, everything is justifiable."
- You cannot make men good by law. Without good men you can't have a good society.
- Where do you draw the line between what is good and what is bad?

Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned each one to his own way; but the LORD has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all."

Moral Absolutes (God says!)

There are objective moral values which transcend culture which are true for all men for all time. There are universal moral and ethical guidelines inherent in man (conscience) and have been revealed to man by God which are based in the very nature of God. Each of us have a sense of moral obligation (universal "ought's") and a basic knowledge (what) and understanding (why) of the difference between good or bad and the need to choose good over evil. Man knows God exists (who) but may choose to suppress to acknowledge His authority.

Universal Moral Ought's

- Similar foundational objective moral values do exist in every culture
Cardinal virtues: prudence (common sense), temperance (self-control), justice, fortitude, bravery, honesty, self-sacrifice, fair-play are always admired as virtues.
Selfishness, cowardice, torture/cruelty, child abuse, rape, & murder are never admired.
There are only slight variations in culture moral codes.
- We all know we should behave a certain way. (We appeal to a behavioral standard everyone seems to know and accept and which doesn't need to be taught.)(fair play) People need to be reminded more often than instructed about morality.
- Objective moral values are valid and binding regardless of whether anybody believes in them or practices them or not.
- We fail to practice ourselves the kind of behavior we expect from other people.
- We make excuses for not keeping natural law.
(guilt/shift responsibility)
- You must have a sense of what characterizes evil before you can point out an example of it.

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p.45

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to z, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it... Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too – for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist – that the world of reality was senseless – I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality – namely my idea of justice – was full of sense... If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning... darkness would be without meaning."

- Without God, there is no absolute right/wrong which imposes itself on our conscience and actions.
- Some things aren't just socially unacceptable, they are absolutely wrong.
- If there is absolute moral law, then there is a Lawgiver (Person/Power).
We then are lawbreakers and are at odds with God. If God is absolutely good, He must hate most of what we do.
- Only a Person can forgive. If there is no personal Mind, there is no sense in asking for allowances. All is hopeless and meaningless. One's guilt can never be reconciled without a personal and merciful God.

The Bible Says...

Inherent Within Man: (moral consciousness)(1 Pet. 2:19)

- Innate knowledge of right and wrong (Natural Law)

Romans 2:14,15

- This is why unbelievers recognize objective moral values.

- Revealed Moral Law
Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5
Psalms 19:7-11
Romans 7:13
Isaiah 51:7
Psalms 119:9,89,91,142,151,160
- Sense of moral obligation
(I "ought" to do right and refrain from evil.)
Psalms 17:3,4
Isaiah 7:15
Isaiah 33:15
Hebrews 5:13,14
- Failure to comply to the universal moral standard causes guilt/shame/and fear of punishment.
Psalms 51:3,4
Psalms 38:3,4,18
Daniel 9:7,8
Ezekiel 20:43
Matthew 27:3,4
John 16:8
- Through God's moral law we are accountable
Romans 2:2; 3:20; 7:7,8,13
- Great blessing/benefit comes from being Biblically moral.
Deuteronomy 30:11,14,15,19,20; 32:46,47; Joshua 1:8

God Is The Ultimate Standard Of Goodness:

Matthew 5:48
1 Peter 1:15,16
Psalms 92:15; 119:68; 145:9,17
Lamentations 3:22,25,32,33
Isaiah 5:16
Daniel 9:7,14,16,18
Hosea 14:9
Zephaniah 3:5
Mk. 10:18
1 John 1:5

- Wickedness is the pursuit of something good in the wrong way.
Evil is the perversion of what is good. (James 5:19,20)
- Moral perfection is an ideal. We cannot achieve it because of our sinful condition.
- There are always consequences for moral failure.

"Why Should I Be Moral?"

- Moral Point Of View
- I am accountable to a universal absolute standard which applies to all and is the guiding force over my life. (Romans 13:1-5)
- Self Centered Point Of View
- "I govern my life for my own best interest or happiness."