



THE REALITY OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Course 2, *In the Beginning*, Lesson 1

The Problem: How can we be certain that God exists? Across every age, countless millions have believed in God's existence without doubt, and even today, millions confidently claim to know Him. However, knowing God and being confident of His existence is distinct from proving His existence. Can we definitively prove that God exists? That answer depends on what we mean by "proof." If by proof we mean scientific verification, involving controlled experiments and irrefutable conclusions, then no, the existence of God cannot be proven in this way. The Divine cannot be confined to a test tube.

Scientific proof operates within a limited sphere of life. Fields like mathematics, chemistry, or physics provide proofs that apply only to specific, narrowly defined areas of thought. Logical proofs, likewise, are only valid when their premises are indisputably true—challenging these premises can often undermine the entire argument.

Most of life's truths, however, lie outside the scope of mathematical, laboratory, or purely logical proofs. For instance, how could one scientifically demonstrate the superiority of virtues like honor, justice, loyalty, or love? How could a man conclusively prove that his wife loves him? He might have compelling evidence, but is that the same as definitive proof? Much of life relies on probabilities. Consider how, in a courtroom, people may be convicted of crimes not based on absolute certainty but on the weight of probability. Tragically, history shows that even this standard has led to errors, with some condemned by mistaken testimony. Yet, such "proof" was sufficient for judgment.

Those who reject the existence of God often dismiss faith as blind or irrational. Yet faith is far from exclusive to religion—it is a universal element of life. We exercise faith when we eat at a restaurant, deposit money in a bank, board a bus or plane, or send our children to school, trusting their teachers won't harm them. Marriage itself is an act of faith, despite high divorce rates. Faith is not the exception in life—it is the rule. Why, then, should faith in matters of religion surprise us?

While it is not possible to provide scientific proof for God's existence, we can encounter overwhelming evidence that leads us to experiment through prayer and personal experience. Such evidence can yield a personal certainty that allows one to proclaim, "I know God." The question then becomes: What is this evidence?

Objectives: In this lesson we will—

- I. Explore how human intuition may point toward the reality of God.
- II. Examine key philosophical and logical reasoning that support belief in God.
- III. Analyze biblical evidence that affirms God's presence and existence.
- IV. Study the words and actions of Jesus Christ as central proof of God's reality.
- V. Explore whether direct encounters with God can serve as evidence for His existence.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF INTUITION

Intuition is often described as the ability to understand or know something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning or analysis. Across cultures and throughout history, humanity has consistently demonstrated a nearly universal

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

belief in a divine presence—a God or gods. This shared belief often arises from an intuitive response to the world we see and hear around us.

William E. Sangster, in his book *Give God a Chance*, offers profound insight into the role of intuition in recognizing the divine. He writes:

"There are some things we know without being told. We didn't read them in a book. They didn't have to be knocked into us by our teachers. No scientific experiment was necessary to prove them. We just knew them. We always knew that love was better than hate and kindness than cruelty. We always knew other things as well. We always knew that beauty pulled us. People vary in the way they respond to beauty, but all feel it—in a flower, in a landscape, in a sunset, in a symphony. It needed no justification. Its 'proof' was in itself. We always knew that truth was better than a lie, however convenient lying might be on occasion! Nor was it truth only in the conversation of day-to-day, but truth in its deepest sense, the truth of things. What a thrill to solve a problem and find the truth!

"We always knew that goodness was better than badness, even if it appealed to us more in some lovely deed of sacrifice than in strict obedience to a high moral code. Who can be unmoved by the goodness of Elizabeth Pilenko, the Russian nun who, on Good Friday, 1945, saw a hysterical girl in the queue for the gas chamber at Ravensbrück Concentration Camp and said, 'Don't be frightened. Look, I'll take your turn,' and went to death in her place?

"Beauty, truth, goodness—how real and high they are! Even when we spurn them, we know in ourselves that we are spurning the best. How do we know? We just do! They are inside us. Animals don't feel like this. We have sight and insight.

"If we follow these insights, they lead us to a being to whom beauty, truth, and goodness are supremely precious. Thus, the way of intuition is a way worthy of respect."

Sangster's reflections affirm the inherent, intuitive awareness of divine qualities like beauty, truth, and goodness. These qualities resonate deeply within human beings, pointing us toward the reality of a Creator. This intuitive knowledge, though not scientific in its form, offers a compelling testimony—an inner conviction that transcends analysis, connecting us to the Divine.

The Word:

1. What does the Bible say about mankind's intuitive knowledge of God? Romans 1:18-20; Acts 14:17
2. What did the Psalmist write about nature as a revelation of God? Psalm 19:1; 97:6
3. What does the Bible say about the person who denies God's existence? Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:28; compare Jeremiah 5:12; 1 John 2:22

Explanation: The Bible teaches that our intuitive knowledge of God originates from Him. As Romans 1:19 states, "*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.*" This means that people are without excuse—not because they have been handed scientific proof, but because God Himself impresses His reality upon their minds as they observe His creation.

This intuition is not learned from books or human teachers; rather, it is a direct impression from God. That is why the Bible so firmly states that denying God's existence is foolish—not due to ignorance or lack of intelligence, but because it disregards the divine impressions placed within the human heart. Intuitive knowledge of God stands as powerful evidence of His reality.

Relevance: Do you recognize the impressions of God's existence in your own heart and mind?

II. THE TESTIMONY OF REASON

Through the ages Christian philosophers have used their reasoning faculties to arrive at five arguments for the existence of God. Even though none of them is a proof, each has some value as supportive evidence.

- A. The argument from cause (the cosmological argument): Reason tells us that all existing things have an adequate cause. The universe, the world, and mankind must have been caused. The original cause must be a supreme Being, whom we call God.
- B. The argument from design (the teleological argument): Our world reveals order, intelligence, harmony, purpose. The existence of such order or design implies the existence of an intelligent Being who is the original Designer. This Being is God. Such an argument from design to Designer requires less faith to believe than the idea that it "just happened." Would anyone believe, for example, that a truck driver dumped a heap of rubble by the River Thames and it just happened to turn into Westminster Abbey?
- C. The argument from being (the ontological argument): This argument was first and most famously articulated by Anselm of Canterbury, a leading theologian of the medieval church. Anselm observed that the human mind possesses the idea of a Being who is absolutely perfect. Because existence is a necessary attribute of perfection, such a Being cannot exist only in thought. Therefore, the very concept of a supremely perfect Being implies His existence in reality—namely, God.
- D. The moral argument (the anthropological argument): Man has a moral sense of what is right and wrong, of what he "ought" and "ought not" to do. He often ignores this "categorical imperative" (Kant), but it is there just the same. The existence of such a sense of right and wrong implies the existence of a supreme Being who gave it to us. He is the Lawgiver and Judge who has the absolute right to command us. Our moral sense is a thumb print of the Great Hand that created us.
- E. The historical argument (the ethnological argument): Throughout history, the peoples of every nation, tribe, and culture across the earth have demonstrated a foundational sense of the divine. This universal inclination has expressed itself in various modes of worship, tailored to their unique cultural and societal contexts. Even when these modes of worship appear primitive, they reflect humanity's acknowledgment of a higher power—whether it is belief in one God or multiple gods. If human nature is inherently drawn to worship, the most reasonable explanation is the existence of a supreme Being who designed humanity to be spiritual and inclined toward reverence.

The Word:

4. What does the Bible say about the quest for God by means of reason alone? Job 11:7; 37:23; Ecclesiastes 8:17; Isaiah 40:28
5. Is there any place at all for reason in religion? Isaiah 1:18; Romans 12:1

Explanation: The Bible teaches that reason alone cannot discover God. He chooses to reveal Himself as our Savior from sin and as our Guide through life, but He hides from us the infinite mysteries of His Person. The arguments from reason provide a strong probability of the existence of God. Accepting the probability, and then seeking Him in the way His Word suggests, results in certainty of His existence.

Relevance: Do you admit the inadequacy of your reasoning powers in the search for ultimate truth? Have you sought God through His revelation in the Bible?

III. THE TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible writers never attempt to give proofs for the existence of God. His existence is assumed. They offer evidence that the Scriptures are God's inspired Word which possesses unique qualities.

The Word:

6. What does the Bible claim in respect to God's ability to predict the future? Isaiah 46:9-10; compare Isaiah 42:9; Daniel 2:28; Acts 3:18; 15:18; Romans 8:29
7. From what source did the prophets receive their messages? 2 Peter 1:19-21
8. What special effect does God's Word have upon the listener? Hebrews 4:12; compare Ephesians 6:17

Explanation: The Bible is not like any other book. Because it is the Word of God it is the instrument of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to those who read it or hear it. No other writers compare with the Bible writers in their capacity to make detailed predictions of future events. In later lessons we will study very significant Bible prophecies which give evidence of the supernatural source of the Scriptural message. The Bible is the revelation of Himself which God has given to the world.

Relevance: Have you sought for God by studying the Bible? It is that very enterprise that we would like to encourage. As we search the Scriptures together, we will gain a clearer view of the character of God, and a greater appreciation of the salvation He offers.

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ claimed to be the eternal God in human flesh, and He taught that genuine knowledge of God is found only in knowing Him. The historical evidence for His life is unusually early, abundant, and drawn from multiple independent sources—Paul's letters, the four Gospels, other early Christian writings, and non-Christian historians such as Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, and the Talmud—giving us stronger documentation than we possess for most ancient figures. As we examine these records, we come to know Jesus as a real figure in time and place. But when we receive Him as Savior, He does more than inform us—He reveals God to us personally. Jesus made profound claims about His relationship with God the Father, declaring a unity, equality, and oneness that unmistakably affirmed His divine nature.

The Word:

9. By what means did Jesus say we can come to know God? Matthew 11:27; John 14:9; compare John 12:45
10. What relationship between Himself and God the Father did Jesus claim? John 5:18; 8:58-59; compare Exodus 3:13-15, John 10:30, 38
11. Why did some of the Jews urge that people not listen to Jesus' teaching? John 10:20
12. On the basis of what accusations did they eventually condemn Jesus to death? Luke 23:2; Mark 14:61-64; John 19:12

Jesus claimed to be God the Son—equal to and mysteriously One with God the Father. When asked if He was divine, He affirmed, "I am" (Mark 14:62; compare Matthew 26:63-64). This bold claim leaves only three possibilities: He was either telling the truth, He was delusional, as some accused Him of being, or He was a deceptive imposter making false claims about Himself.

In the New Testament and early Christian writings, there is no evidence to support claims that Jesus was either insane or deceitful. While He faced accusations of both, the weight of historical and recorded testimony stands in stark contrast to these assertions. Insanity does not produce teachings marked by profound wisdom, moral integrity, and transformative clarity as Jesus consistently demonstrated. Similarly, deception is incapable of sustaining the lasting reverence and devotion of countless individuals across generations and cultures. The unparalleled influence of Jesus' life and message defies any reasonable suggestion that He was merely a liar or an imposter. Such enduring impact speaks powerfully to the authenticity of His character and mission.

If Jesus were neither insane nor immoral, His claim to be God must be taken seriously. A person of sound mind and exemplary moral character—traits consistently attributed to Jesus—does not intentionally deceive others. Therefore, if Jesus was not mad or bad, the only logical conclusion is that He was indeed telling the truth about His divine identity.

Relevance: Have you taken the step of seeking God through a personal relationship with Jesus?

V. THE TESTIMONY OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Is it possible to know God through personal experience? Absolutely! In fact, a personal relationship with God is the most meaningful and enduring way to truly know Him. Simply knowing about God is vastly different from truly knowing Him through a deep, spiritual connection.

This kind of intimate relationship with God is what Jesus and all the Bible writers earnestly sought to inspire. As we've seen, to know Christ is to know God. Jesus repeatedly called people to accept Him as Savior and Lord, offering a way to experience God personally and profoundly. This is the heart of the knowledge of God that the Scriptures were written to nurture and encourage.

The Word:

13. Why did John say he wrote his Gospel? John 20:31
14. Who did Jesus say we would find as we study the Scriptures? John 5:39; compare Luke 24:27, 44
15. How may we have eternal life? John 17:3, 23
16. What certainty did Bible writers have that they knew God? Ephesians 3:19; Philippians 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 2:5

Explanation: The Bible stands as a profound revelation of God's character. Knowing Him goes far beyond intellectual understanding—it is a rich and transformative spiritual experience. As you encounter Him in His Word and through prayer, the Lord fulfills His promise to come to you (John 14:18), revealing His boundless love and truth to your heart. Your relationship with God becomes the wellspring of peace, joy, and a sense of purpose in serving Him and others. While God has chosen not to disclose much about His nature in Scripture, He has revealed an abundance about His character. He is portrayed as an infinitely loving and saving God who "*is not willing that any should perish*" (2 Peter 3:9). Yet, He is also infinitely just, and His holiness compels Him to turn away from those who reject Him (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Relevance: Eternal life in fellowship with our infinitely loving God is promised to those who seek to know Him. Are you ready to approach God in prayer, asking Him to reveal Himself to you? Will you dedicate yourself to exploring the Scriptures and pursuing a deeper understanding of His truth and love?

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. No one can know God until they can prove His existence scientifically.
 - b. There is no place for reason in Christianity.
 - c. Only God can accurately and comprehensively foretell the future with precise detail.
 - d. To know Jesus Christ is to know God.
2. Discuss: We come to know God most deeply through faith—by opening our hearts to Him and allowing His Spirit to speak within us. Yet God, in His kindness, also provides external evidence of His presence and character. From the beauty of creation to the testimony of Scripture, from answered prayer to transformed lives, these signs help affirm what faith already perceives. Which evidences of God's existence speak most powerfully to you? What moments, experiences, or observations have stirred your awareness of His reality?

