

We Can Believe

Part 1

Text – Psalm 14 : 1

Intro. – In reading that verse, you would think that David is referring to an **atheist**. He is not. David would not have had much of an occasion to encounter what we would describe as a modern-day atheist. He is rather referring to corrupt and wicked people who ignore God’s existence as if He would never be their eternal judge.

I doubt that there are many, if any, of the corrupt people David referenced here today. You would never consider yourself to be corrupt and wicked, people who ignore God or His judgment over us one of these days.

But have you ever wondered or wrestled with the thought, **“Is God real, Does He exist?”** Maybe you’ve looked at seemingly good people suffer and wonder why a loving God would allow that. You may have encountered a number of situations or circumstances that overwhelmed your heart and soul and in times of exasperation, wondered if God really existed and if He did, does He really care?

Over the next few weeks, we are going to dive into the world of **Christian apologetics**. The word **“apologetics”** comes from the Greek word, **“apologia”** and denotes a courtroom scene and suggests presenting one’s defense in the face of opposition – providing the reasoning for one’s legal position.

Apologetics is a giving of reasons for what we believe and practice. The Biblical mandate for apologetics comes from **I Peter 3:14-15** – **“And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”** This, again, is our mandate!

We want to look at the **reasons** why we can believe with confidence that God exists. Let’s consider the following today:

I. First, Why Does it Matter? –

- Why does it matter if God exists? Let’s begin with where we are as a society.
- **ILLUSTRATION** – Listen to the following: “Have you not heard of the madman who lit a lamp in the bright morning and went to the marketplace crying ceaselessly, ‘I seek God! I seek God!’ There were many among those standing there who didn't believe in God, so he made them laugh. ‘Is God lost?’ one of them said. ‘Has he gone astray like a child?’ said another. ‘Or is he hiding? Has he gone on board ship and emigrated?’ So, they laughed and shouted to one another. The man sprang into their midst and looked daggers at them. ‘Where is God?’ he cried. ‘I will tell you. We have killed him - you and I, we are all his killers! But how have we done this? How could we swallow up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the

horizon? What will we do as the earth is set loose from its sun?' These words were spoken by **Friedrich Nietzsche** in 1889. Nietzsche was a German scholar and philosopher, and he was no friend of Christianity!

- **Chuck Colson** had this to say about Nietzsche's point. It was not that God does not exist, but that God has become **irrelevant**. Men and women may assert that God exists or that He does not, but it makes little difference either way. God is dead not because He doesn't exist, but because we live, play, procreate, govern, and die as though He doesn't."
- This leads us to the problem that plagues our society.
- **The problem of Apatheism –**
 - According to apologist, **Tawa Anderson**, in his book "Why Believe," "Apatheism is a disinclination to care much about religious matters. For an apatheist, the big questions of life (Is there a God, What happens after we die, Can we know right from wrong?) are relatively unimportant. It is not necessarily that apatheists actively disbelieve in God; they simply do not care about the questions related to God's existence or lack thereof."
 - The modern concept of apatheism came onto the scene in 2003 with an essay written by **Jonathan Rauch** titled "**Let It Be**."
 - In the essay, Rauch said: "I used to call myself an atheist ... but the larger truth is that it has been years since I really cared one way or another. I'm ... an apatheist."
 - This is why it is sometimes difficult to talk to people about Jesus.
 - Think about it like this. I'm a huge North Carolina Tar Heel fan. I may come up to you and start talking about the Heels. I tell you that Drake Maye is the best QB in college football and I ask, "**Don't you agree?**" If you're not a Tar Heel fan or even a football fan, you may say, "I don't even know who Drake Maye is and I really don't care who he is or what kind of quarterback he is."
 - That gives you an idea of what we're facing today. We can talk about and believe that Jesus is the only true and living God and that He is worthy of our love and allegiance, but if we're talking to someone who doesn't even care, we're not likely to make much of an impact.
- This leads us to consider the question of why it's important to believe in God and how to, hopefully, ignite curiosity in the hearts and minds of those we interact with.
 1. **The existence of God and the nature of Christianity provide answers to the Big Questions of Life –**
 - We briefly mentioned some of those big questions a few minutes ago: "Does God exist? What is moral? What is right and wrong? Where do we go after we die? What is our purpose for living?"

- **ILLUSTRATION** – **Blaise Pascal** was a 17th century mathematician and philosopher. Up until his early 20s, his Catholic faith meant very little to him and made very little impact in his life. In November of 1654, Pascal came to Christ. From that moment forward his faith defined his life and he set out to demonstrate the truth of God and the Christian faith.
 - He had this to say about the Big Question of Life after Death: “Nothing is so important to man as his state: nothing more fearful than eternity. Thus, the fact that there exist men who are indifferent to the loss of their being and the peril of an eternity of wretchedness is against nature. With everything else they are quite different; they fear the most trifling things, foresee, and feel them; and the same man who spends so many days and nights in fury and despair at losing some office or at some imaginary affront to his honor is the very one who knows that he is going to lose everything through death but feels neither anxiety nor emotion. It is a monstrous thing to see one and the same heart at once so sensitive to minor things and so strangely insensitive to the greatest. It is an incomprehensible spell, a supernatural torpor (lethargy).”
- God, in His being, and through His Revelation provide for us the answers to life’s biggest questions.
 - God, in His Word, tells us that He **exists** – “In the beginning, God...” (Gen. 1:1)
 - God, in His Word, tells us what is **moral** – “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.” (Eccl. 12:13)
 - God, in His Word, tells us how to know **right from wrong** – “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (I Cor. 6:9-11 -ESV)
 - God, in His Word, tells us about **eternity** – “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:15) / “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:21)

- God, in His Word, tells us what our **purpose** is – “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deut. 6:5 – ESV)

2. The existence of God taught in our Christian faith is the foundation of Western Civilization –

- There are seven elements of typical Western societies that are built upon the philosophical and theological foundations of a Biblical Christian worldview:

A. Christianity teaches that the natural order (creation) is created by a rational God and is ordered and knowable.

- The laws of gravity, attraction, polarity, etc., find their origination in the ordered world that God has created.

B. Christianity teaches that the physical world is created by God and was created without sin and is the reflection of objective reality.

- Before the Fall, the Earth was good and without the stain of sin.
- “God said that it was good.” (Genesis)

C. Christianity teaches that all human beings are created in the image of God and have intrinsic worth and value.

- This truth informs our feelings and behaviors about the sanctity and value of human life – from the womb to the tomb.

D. Christianity has given birth to modern democracy.

- “If God is the supreme sovereign, then human rulers have only derivative legitimacy and authority.”
- With that in mind, these earthly rulers should lead & conduct themselves for the best interest of their citizens.

E. Christianity provides a foundation for private property, with the balance of God’s ultimate ownership of all things.

- God owns all things, and He allows us, through hard work and investment, to produce the fruits of our labor and investments and exercise the role of stewards over what we are loaned by God.

F. Christianity has given birth to modern capitalism.

- By our hard work and ingenuity, we are able to earn livings and capitalism has been the vehicle that has lifted many out of poverty.

G. Christianity teaches that there is a transcendent moral lawgiver – a personal, divine moral being – who alone can serve as a sufficient foundation for both objective morality and the legitimate rule of law.

- We will do good to remember that our rules and laws are derived from a higher moral and objective standard that serves as the example by which our moral beliefs and actions can and should be judged.
- For instance, why do we consider behaviors like murder, rape, incest, stealing, etc., to be morally wrong if not for the presence of a God Who has set the standard for our understanding of right and wrong?

INVITATION – I want to close with a quick look back at **Friedrich Nietzsche**. He contended, as Chuck Colson summarized, that God is dead because He is irrelevant.

As believers in Christ, we cannot live like God is irrelevant. If He does not matter in our lives, in our moral, ethical, relational decisions, how will we ever help the world to see that He is a God worth serving and surrendering their lives to?

Is God relevant in your life and are you making Him relevant in your interactions?