

Why We Believe What We Believe and Why Does It Matter?

The Bible tells us to reason, to use our minds, not just our hearts and souls

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord ... " (*ESV, KJV, ...*)

Matthew 22:37-39 (The 1st and greatest command)

1 Peter 3:15-16, 1 Corinthians 13:11, Colossians 4:5-6, Philippians 4:5, Acts 17:2, 18:4, 18:19, 19:8,9

Even More Biblical Instruction: [Leviticus 19:17](#), [James 3:17](#), [2 Peter 1:5](#)

The Bible tells us that the accuser's case sounds good until we hear the defense: Proverb 18:17

Why apologetics?

- To Go Deeper In Understanding Why We Believe
- To Consider The Evidence For and Against The Christian World View
- To Be Better Prepared To:
 - Deal With Doubt
 - Help Friends And Family Who Experience Doubt
 - Understand And "Handle" Questions And Objections by non-believers
 - Initiate a "reasonable" discussion with non-believers
 - NOT To Learn How To Win Arguments

IS GOD A MORAL MONSTER

The "New Atheists" Accusations

- **God ordered the annihilation of entire civilizations.** (genocide, infanticide...)
- **God brutally executed people for minor sins.**
- **God passively condones outrageously immoral behavior.** (polygamy, incest, ...)
- **God actively condones slavery.**
- **God is homophobic.**
- **God allows women to be treated like property .**

IS GOD EVIL? The accuser's case:

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all of fiction. Jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic-cleanser; a misogynistic homophobic racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal sado-masochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

-- Richard Dawkins, [The God Delusion](#)

PERSPECTIVE MATTERS. Most of the skeptics' complaints evaporate when the bible stories are taken in context. Ravi Zacharias has said, "**any text taken out of context is a pretext**". That brings up the question of motive. Most proclaimed atheists have an ulterior, often hidden, motive for rejecting god, and their intellectual arguments are mere rationalization for their denial or rejection of God.

Samples of Possible Overall Responses to These Attacks On God's Character

IS GOD IMMORAL? (IS GOD EVIL?)

"You know what? I felt the same way the first time I discovered all the violence in the Old Testament. Wow! Talk about your "R" rated content! Have you read some of those passages? I think the real question, though, is whether we can reconcile certain "evil" events in the Old Testament with the Bible's overall theme of a God who is always righteous, just, loving and gracious? Isn't that really what we are asking?"

"Let me ask a very basic question. Are you really interested in whether or not those events are understandable when you study the entire Old Testament in context? If so ... then the first thing I think we have to understand is that there is a huge difference between what people did and what God approved or wanted them to do. For example, there is not even a hint that God approved of Lot offering his daughters to the mob. Do you see the difference?"

(By the way, if we wanted to make up an appealing new religion, we would definitely not fabricate a "holy" book that includes stories of followers doing horrible things.)

"Here's another interesting point. Isn't it amazingly ironic that these complaints would come from an atheist. The very skeptics who make all these accusations are the same people who will argue that the Old Testament is pure fiction and that there is no God! So, who is it, exactly, that they are criticizing?"

"You know what? If you read certain passages in the Old Testament, you can't help but be troubled by them – especially when taken out of context. Just wondering – Have you read the Old Testament or do you just accept these accusations as fact because you heard or read them somewhere?"

"It's great that you're interested in this. There's no doubt that it's a topic that demands investigation and study. If there is a mega-force creator who is in charge of every detail of the universe, and if rejecting Him could decide your fate – forever; I have to ask if you are **absolutely, positively** certain that you have enough evidence to conclude that there is no God?"

"May I ask you a brutally honest question? If you had the time and resource to study all the evidence both for and against Christianity, and if that evidence pointed overwhelmingly to the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth ...

- actually lived,
- was killed by Roman soldiers,
- miraculously came back from death so we could choose true freedom,
- longs for you to commit to a life-changing relationship with Him, ...

Would you become a Christian?

"In the New Testament, Jesus promises to give you a peace that surpasses all human understanding. I personally went from skeptic to disciple after too many years of seeking "self actualization" - the world's ways. I then found that peace and wouldn't give it up for anything. I'd like nothing more than for you to find it also.

IS THAT A DECISION YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE?

What About The More Specific Attacks?

IS GOD A BLOODTHIRSTY KILLER & TORTURER!

“Bloodthirsty Killer” Response

“OK. Here’s the deal. God created mankind and gave us the free will to choose to love Him or not – to obey Him or not. And God made it clear from the beginning that everyone would be judged and punished for choosing to do evil. Sadly, people became so evil, and their sins so abominable, that He actually killed everyone on earth (if the Biblical flood is true), except Noah and his family, to give humanity a fresh start. How long did that “reset” last? ... Why?

“Later, the people throughout Canaan were doing such despicable things, including child sacrifices, that you and I would have been screaming for justice. What punishment would you recommend for people who kill children?

“The Bible tells us that God is a wise and just judge. Then, surely, He has the right to decide the punishment and how it should be carried out?

“You know what’s interesting? The “new atheists” are the first to complain that a loving and powerful God should not permit so much evil and suffering. Isn’t it interesting that they squeal like stuck pigs because God did, in fact, do something to stop horribly evil people from committing such atrocities? Could it be that this reveals their true motive? What do you think that motive might be? Remember the Proverb?

WHO WANTS TO WORSHIP A “JEALOUS” GOD

“Jealous God” Response

“Primarily a translation/definition problem. More accurately, “intolerant of worship of false, man-made gods”

“If turning away from God to worship the world’s idols, by choice, rejects God and deprives us of the plan and life path that He asks us to choose, then ... Yes ... God is “jealous”. The biggest question is why. Who is hurt by our rejection of God? God, man or both?

DOES GOD CONDONE SLAVERY

The “Slavery” Response

“Wow! Just the mention of the word, slavery, triggers such powerful emotions in our world today. Let’s consider, though, all the ways that “slavery” was very different in Old Testament times?

“Most people don’t realize that most “slaves” were really “bond servants” who voluntarily put themselves into servitude, often to pay a debt. Can you see that the concept of “indentured servant” is a much better way to understand “slavery” in that ancient Hebrew culture?

“Bond servants had rights under Jewish law and their servitude was for a limited number of years. Many

would voluntarily continue their term of servitude because they **chose** to stay with their household.

“Also, remember that brutal enslavement was a global practice outside of the land of Israel. Remember how the people of the Northern Kingdom were dragged away with hooks through their noses? By comparison, being a “slave” in a Jewish household was a blessing.

“Finally, **it was Christians who led the drive to abolish slavery**. Have you read or watched the story of William Wilberforce and John Newton?

“And one more vital point: The Bible reports the practice of slavery, but **nowhere does it condone** slavery of any kind. It was never in God’s plan.

DOES THE O.T. Demean WOMEN

The “Demeans Women” Response

“I think we all agree that the treatment of women was abominable.

“To be fair, though, we need to be sure we’re aware of several extremely important points:

1. God did not command or condone any of the despicable events that the new atheists use as evidence of God’s attitude toward women.
2. Throughout the entire world, women were little more than property, culturally speaking.
3. The Bible records history with brutal honesty. Anyone who wanted to “sell” their religion would have omitted or, at the least, sugar coated all those atrocities in the Old Testament.
4. A number of women, including some highly unlikely Gentiles (e.g. Rahab and Ruth), played prominent roles in Jewish history. Heroines such as Abigail received far more recognition than you would expect from a horribly repressive culture.
5. Almost unbelievably, Gentile women such as Rahab and Ruth are included in the New Testament genealogies of Jesus.
6. Women continued to play important roles in Judeo-Christian history all the way through the New Testament.
- 7.

“Wouldn’t you agree that the Judeo-Christian treatment of women was, if anything, way ahead of the rest of the world?”

Is the God of the Old Testament a Moral Monster
Reasonable Faith Collin County Meeting

Recap – Is God Immoral?

- ✓ The Old Testament is loaded with sex and violence.
- ✓ Dawkins and his fellow neo-atheists are attacking “the God of the Old Testament” more aggressively than ever.
- ✓ Their number one weapon is ridicule.
- ✓ Their arguments can’t stand up to objective analysis.
- ✓ “A text taken out of context is a pretext.”
- ✓ God has more right to punish abominable crimes than we do. That’s exactly what he did in the O.T.
- ✓ God Brought Us In; He Can Take Us Out! He can also resurrect us with new bodies!

How To Respond To Ridicule, Criticisms & Objections?

“They Don’t Care How Much You Know Until _____”
“_____ Are The Best Answers!”

The World Is Relentlessly Attacking Christianity

- ✓ Without The _____, There Is No Christianity
- ✓ The _____ of Christ Is The First Point of Attack
- ✓ “The _____ of God” (the _____) Is The Second Point of Attack
- ✓ The Problem Of Evil Is Twisted To Deny God’s _____
- ✓ New Atheists Attack “God of the Old Testament” To Make Us _____ That He Is Perfect and Just.
- ✓ Satan’s Strategy From The Beginning: Create _____ By Questioning and Ridiculing God.
- ✓ Evidence Overwhelmingly Favors The Christian _____ View
- ✓ But Arguing and Debating Will Almost Always _____
- ✓ Love, Grace & Winsomeness Will _____

Questions Are Almost Always The Best Answers

“That’s interesting. What do you mean by that?”

“Can you help me understand how you came to that conclusion? How do you know that?”

That’s a really interesting question; and, you know what? I don’t really know the full answer. Can we get together again after I do a little research on that topic?

“Now you’ve really got me thinking. Have you ever wondered – seriously – why we are here? Do you ever feel like there’s an emptiness, something missing, somewhere deep in your gut? Can you say that you have a purpose and a hope?”

“Are you willing to reject extensive evidence because of your presupposition that nothing supernatural is possible? Will you allow that to stop you from using your intellect to infer the most reasonable world view?”

“If you knew, beyond reasonable doubt, that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and that Jesus lived, was killed by Roman soldiers, came back from the grave, is alive today and longs for you to accept Him, would you consider becoming a Christian?”

Is the God of the Old Testament a Moral Monster
Reasonable Faith Collin County Meeting

Resources:

Just a few of the many excellent books on this topic:

Is God a Moral Monster, Paul Copan

Keeping Your Kids on God's Side: 40 Conversations to Help Them Build a Lasting Faith, Natasha Crain

Is The Bible Sexist, Racist, Homophobic, and Genocidal? , Jonathan Morrow

The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important that Happens in Between, Greg Koukl

Think Christianly, Jonathan Morrow

The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity, Lee Strobel

Evidence Beyond A Reasonable Doubt, Rabbi Schmuel Waldman

Who Made God?, Edgar Andrews

Cold Case Christianity, J Warner Wallace

Mere Christianity, C S Lewis (All Time Classic)

Jesus On Trial, David Limbaugh

On-Line Resources:

These highly recommended web sites will lead you to countless blog, video and podcast resources:

- reasonablefaith.org
- mamabearapologetics.com
- paulcopan.com
- str.org
- coldcasechristianity.com
- crossexamined.org

A very different kind of web site is also enormously helpful:

- beliefmap.org