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# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

*Romans 1:18-23*  
*Lesson #2*  
*Is God there?*  
*10/2/2022*

**A 5 year old child is asked to define faith**



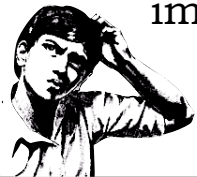
“Faith is believing something you know isn’t true.”

**Is she wiser than her years?**

1

### The Question

Is belief in God a rational response to reality, or an outmoded delusion spread throughout the population by viruses of the mind, based on flimsy and naive reasoning, and imposed by authoritarian institutions and individuals?



2

***A robust, healthy faith is:***





- ✓ Intellectually **convincing.**
- ✓ Spiritually **satisfying.**
- ✓ Morally **transforming.**
- ✓ Socially **connecting.**
- ✓ Culturally **inspiring.**

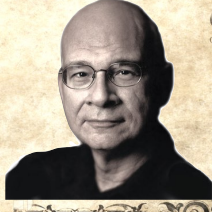
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### 1. God’s existence & **RATIONAL FAITH.**

- ✓ The issue is not faith or reason **but rather 1) breadth of perspective, 2) logic, and 3) commitment.**
- ✓ Belief in God is not a blind irrational leap, **but a rational commitment to evidence from creation & conscience.**
- ✓ We have “witnesses” (clues) to, **not “proofs” of, God’s existence.**
- ✓ **Not everyone** will have “ears to hear” or “eyes to see” the witnesses.

4

“The Scripture and science do not give us “proofs”, they give us data and clues. **Proofs are a function of commitment.**”



*Tim Keller*

5

God's existence should be natural to all who **seek** Him and have **eyes to see**.

*Acts 17*

“26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind ... 27 **that they should seek God**, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though **He is not far from each one of us**; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For **we also are His offspring**.’”

2. God's existence & **SPIRITUAL ANTENNA**

6

*Isaiah 55:9*

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so **are My ways higher than your ways. and My thoughts than your thoughts.**”

Our “spiritual antenna”  
**is tuned to God's station,**  
but we keep **changing the channel.**

*Luke 16:16*

“The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is **forcing his way into it.**”

7

*Acts 17*

“23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ **What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.**”

God is **revealed** in nature and **clarified** in Apostolic teaching.

Be a **Berean** - seek, ask, knock, listen, and believe.

8

*Romans 1*

“19 because that which is known about God is **evident within them**; for God made it **evident to them**. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made**, so that they are **without excuse**.

25 For **they exchanged** the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,”

9

### **Consider:**

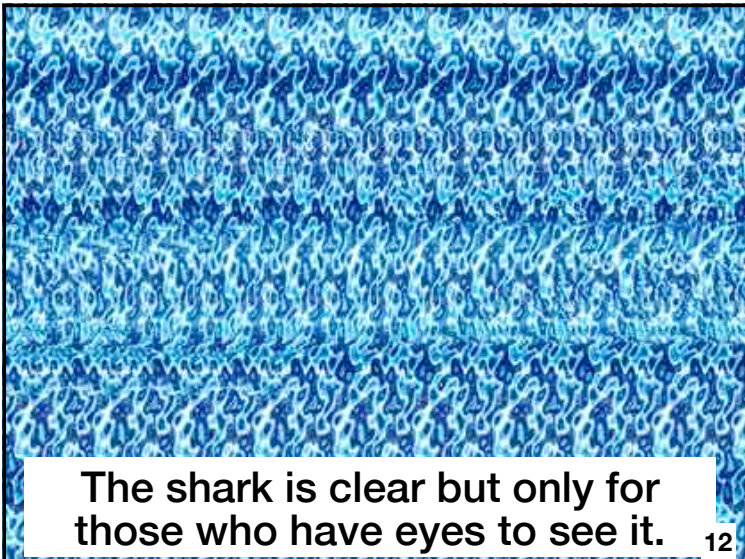
- It seems **natural for children** to believe in God.
- Religion is **common in history and culture**.
- Humans seem to **assume an immaterial (spiritual) root** to reason and reality.
- Humans have strong impulses concerning **moral values** and **immortal life**.
- Modern science was birthed **in the Christian tradition's** ordered cosmos, rational thought, and desire to understand God.

10

### **The “image of God” in the creation**

- ✓ The universe had an **origin**.
- ✓ The universe is **ordered**.
- ✓ The universe is **designed for life**.
- ✓ The universe is seen as **beautiful**.
- ✓ We have a **moral / spiritual sense**.

11



The shark is clear but only for those who have eyes to see it. 12



Sometimes things become clear only after we have a little help. 13



Sometimes things become clear only after we have a little help. 13

“I am an atheist to protest the fact that even if God exists he has not revealed himself clearly to his creatures, or shown us divine compassion. Even if there is a God after all, I will shame him for not providing sufficient evidence to believe.”

John W. Loftus

As imperfect people in an imperfect world **we will always want more evidence.**

The problem does not rest with the evidence **so much as with the eye sight and a hungry heart.**

14

*Matthew 13:1*

**“He who has ears, let him hear.”**

*Matthew 13:12*

“For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but **whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.**”



Responding **to what we have** is key to gaining more insight.

15

### 3. God’s existence & HUNGRY HEARTS

*Matthew 5:3-11*

“Blessed are the **poor in spirit**,...those who **mourn**,...the **humble**,...those who **hunger and thirst**,...the merciful,...the pure in heart,...peacemakers,...the **persecuted.**”

Acknowledging God’s existence brings us meaning, significance, & hope **for those who long for it.**

16

*Romans 2*

“14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they **show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness,**”

The divine image is imprinted not only in the creation but also in **human conscience.**  
Get in touch with your soul.

The Hierarchy of human needs distinguishes us as made in the image of God.

Abraham Maslow



Transcendence

Self actualization  
- Cognitive / Aesthetic

Esteem needs  
- respect from others

Belonging needs  
- social security

Safety needs  
- material security for the future

Biological needs  
- food & shelter

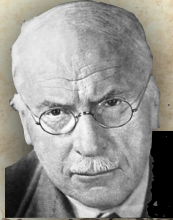
Spiritually oriented

Socially oriented

Self oriented

“Through pride we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, **‘Something is out of tune’.**”

Carl Jung



“There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.”

Blaise Pascal

Three clues from human conscience that stimulate “soul sorrow” longings.

- ✓ **GUILT & SHAME** - I feel unworthy.
- ✓ **ISOLATION & DESPAIR** - I feel alone.
- ✓ **MEANING & DIRECTION** - I feel lost.

“I know the sun exists not because I can see it but rather that by it I see everything else. I know that God exists, not because I see Him but because by Him I make sense of myself and the world.”

C.S. Lewis



#### 4. God’s existence & A LIVING HOPE

*John 1:9*


“There was the true light which, coming into the world, **enlightens every man.**”

*John 6:68*

“Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have words of eternal life.**”

The best “**witness**” to the Christian narrative may be the hopelessness associated with the alternatives to it.

“As an atheist I believed that everything that made my life exciting and worth living was an illusion and that reality (philosophical materialism) was in the end intolerably boring.”



C.S. Lewis

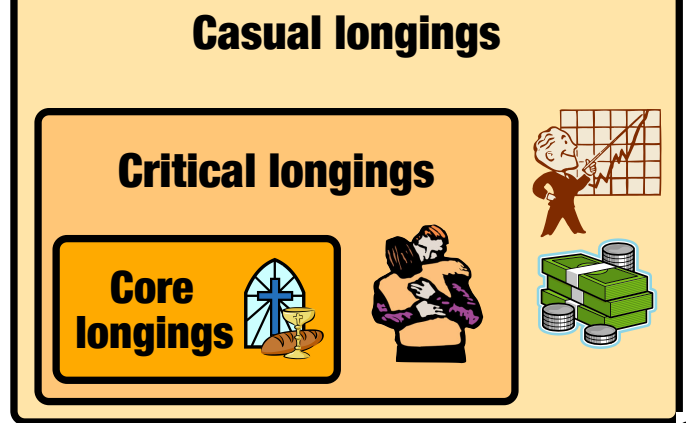
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*Listen to your soul.*

**Casual longings**

**Critical longings**

**Core longings**



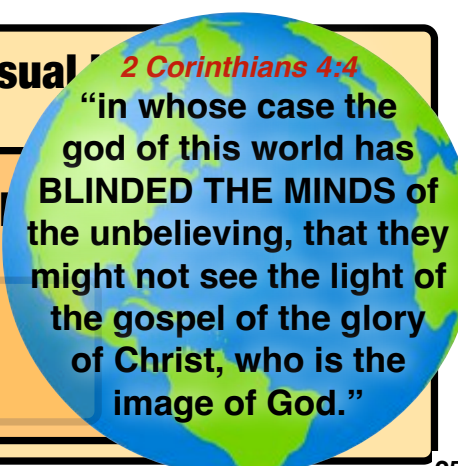
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A false messiah’s focus is superficial.


**Casual** *2 Corinthians 4:4*

**Critical** “in whose case the god of this world has **BLINDED THE MINDS** of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

**Core longings**




25



*Richard Dawkins*  
(British evolutionary biologist)

“Humans have always wondered about the meaning of life. . . life has no higher purpose than to perpetuate the survival of DNA . . . life has no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference.”

26



*Richard Dawkins*  
(British evolutionary biologist)

“I stand in awe of the wonder of life and can but offer humble thanks for the gift of being a part of the cosmos.”

*But to whom can he give thanks?*

27

**Worldly cultures live with a cut flower moral impulse.**

**embracing the flower’s glory (beauty)**

**while denying its basis (root)**



28

- ✓ **Mortality** - WHY do we die?
- ✓ **Meaning** - WHY are we here?
- ✓ **Morality** - WHY do we seek the good?
- ✓ **Management** - WHY do we struggle?



Are these Questions best answered by the Christian narrative or by the alternatives?

“The reason the Christian religion swept the world was its unique message and its evangelistic efforts.”

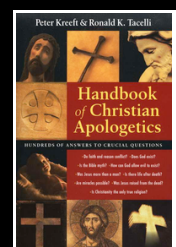
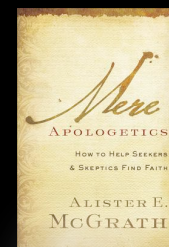
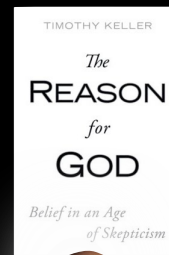
**Bart Ehrman**  
The Triumph of Christianity

## A Berean's look at ...

Next week  
Rom.9:22-23

Is God fair?  
(Pluralism)

## Recommended



**Lee Strobel**