

# Code

Clues and Conclusions



Peter Bellingham

# GOD?

## BEFORE WE BEGIN

Maybe you don't believe in God at all. Or perhaps you believe there's some kind of Higher Power, but don't know what it is. Maybe you have specific religious beliefs. Or perhaps you're just not sure.

*Does it matter?* Many people go through life assuming that if there is a truth out there, they can get by quite well without knowing about it. They'd rather just get on with making the best job of their life here, rather than think too much about what might or might not be 'beyond.' Certainly, there's already so much to keep us occupied in daily life. It's tempting to just focus on that, and 'hope for the best' when it comes to spiritual things.

Others have decided that there's no way of knowing truth, only opinion. Since we are manipulated and lied to so often, they feel that facts are almost impossible to know. So they live in a constant state of suspicion, uncommitted to anything except their own viewpoint - and they can't really trust even in that. Once again, they've decided to just 'get by'.

But *is that really a wise way to live?* If your house was built on a fault line and could collapse at any moment, you'd want to know about it, if at all possible. Equally, if it was built on an undiscovered gold mine, you'd want to know about it. Knowing the truth matters immensely - the stakes are high. Jesus put it this way, *What good does it do you if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?* (Mark 8:26). He also told a parable about a man who was given a small amount of money to invest, but didn't believe he could really do anything with it, so he just buried it in the ground.<sup>1</sup> How tragic.

Many throughout history have been determined to know truth. No matter what their starting point might have been (rich or poor, healthy or sick, intellectual or practical, religious or non-religious), they've sought to look beyond their own opinions, and society's opinions, to find out what's real. They've done this because they have a sense that it really matters. Fault-line, gold-mine, or just plain earth, they haven't been content to just live day-by-day, assuming all is well and hoping for the best. They've refused to bury their opportunity in the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 25:14-30

*What kind of person are you?* This booklet is an invitation to you to seriously seek truth. Of course, you're totally free to put it aside and just carry on with your life as it is. But the invitation is here.

Jesus Christ made the bold claim that He didn't come just to *tell* the truth. He claimed to *be* the truth. *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6).

If He was wrong - then you've lost nothing by seriously looking. If He was right, then your journey will bring you into contact not just with a set of ideas, bits of good advice, or one optional path amongst many. You will encounter God Himself in the living person of Jesus.

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# INTRODUCTION

We're making no assumptions about what you do or don't believe. We're not criticising you for your sincerely-held beliefs, or mocking them. We're grateful that you would take the time to study this booklet with an open mind and a receptive heart, and we invite you to get in touch with us on anything at all that you have difficulty with or questions about.

We wrote this booklet because we are convinced from both evidence and experience that it's possible - and vitally important - to know truth, and to know God in a personal relationship through Jesus. We have come to the settled conviction that God exists, and He is not silent. We will look at science, philosophy, logic, history and experience, as well as what Christians claim to be the Word of God- the Bible, as we seek to see what God has said. We will not hide the ultimate motivation - that you would be equipped to put your trust in Jesus Christ. Not by taking a blind 'leap of faith', but by genuinely engaging with the reality of what is said.

The articles are deliberately short. Ideally, we recommend that you only read one per day, so you can have time to properly think about and digest what you read.

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## DAY ONE

### The Question of Truth

*Jesus said, "I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognise that what I say is true." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. (John 18:37)*

What is "truth"? The word comes from the Old English word *trǣwþ*, meaning 'faithfulness' or 'constancy'. Truth is 'that which is faithful to fact or reality.' For example, if you were born in Shrewsbury, and you say, "*I was born in Shrewsbury*", you're speaking truth. I might think you were born in London; I may even tell others you were born in London no matter what I think, feel or say about your birthplace, the truth is that you were born in Shrewsbury. You can't have been born in both Shrewsbury and London. When it comes to truth, we have an 'either/or' situation. Something either is, or it is not.

Why do we even need to define 'truth'? It's common when thinking about matters such as, "*Does God exist?*", or "*Who is God?*", to hear people respond "*If it's true for you, then that's great.*" Their idea is that truth is relative; we have a 'both/and' situation where everyone has their own reality, their own equally valid truth.

Indeed, everyone *can* have their own *opinion* on truth<sup>2</sup>. But *opinions* about something don't change the *nature* of that something. We must understand this if we want to begin *seeking* truth.

Jesus said, "*I am the truth*" and on another occasion He asked His disciples, "*Who do people say that I am?*"<sup>3</sup> He acknowledged that people have different *opinions* about who He is, but those *opinions* do nothing to change the facts, the reality of who He actually is.

In saying "*I am the truth*" Jesus was claiming that in every way He is utterly faithful to reality. Put another way, He is the measuring stick, the standard against which everything else is judged.

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<sup>2</sup> If, in my opinion, God is just another word for 'people's ideas about a higher being', then yes, everyone can have their own ideas, and those ideas would be true for those people - in other words those ideas would be faithful to the opinion of those people. But that 'pick and mix' idea is based itself just on an *idea* about what the word 'God' means, that may not correspond to any reality! The Bible says that God is *not... formed by the art and imagination of man* (Acts 17:29).

<sup>3</sup> John 14:6; Mark 8:27

So, truth is absolute reality. Truth is *objective* (that is, mind-independent) not *subjective* (that is, dependent on people's opinions). Truth is *exclusive* rather than *inclusive* (something either is, or it is not). According to Jesus, truth can be seen and known, through Him.

## **DAY TWO**

### **The Question of Proof**

*It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search them out.*  
(Proverbs 25:2 KJV)

Some people are increasingly sceptical of all historical sources, since everyone tends to bring a bias to what they write, so perspectives presented may be untrustworthy. Certainly we must be aware of bias, and cautious with 'evidence' presented. Yet the presence of bias doesn't necessarily invalidate the information being reported. From the sceptical standpoint, some go on to claim that nothing is trustworthy and no final conclusions can ever be reached. This way of thinking mirrors the suspicion towards truth that has become so common in our society.

Yet this mindset is fatally flawed. There are plenty of things we trust in, without having 100% proof of their reality. For example, can you *prove* that you exist? You say you're human - but you could in fact be a butterfly dreaming that you're human. You think you've lived so many years - but you could have popped into existence 5 minutes ago, with just the illusion of having memories. Of course you will be biased towards wanting to believe you are real! Of course you can't prove you exist. But you weigh up the available evidence (*'I feel, I think, I remember'*) and based on those substantial clues, you conclude that you *do* exist, and you live accordingly. You can say with confidence, "*The truth is, I do exist.*" The truth of your existence is discoverable through the clues that are in front of you. In fact, most people don't even look for clues of their own existence - because it is so self-evident. We 'take it on trust' and get on with life.

As human beings, we're equipped to search for and assess evidence, then to draw conclusions, and live based on them. We're also equipped to trust - and not need 'every 'i' dotted and every 't' crossed' before we commit to believing something. This is part of what makes us human.

Is there a particular area of life that you're really interested in? For example, animal behaviour, or chemistry, or music. There's a lot to learn and find out, and a certain joy and satisfaction in searching and finding out more. You're not forever sceptical about every new detail you find out - otherwise you could never progress in actually playing that instrument, or training that dog, or developing new products.

Truth is discoverable. 'Proof' has more to do with looking at the 'clues' and settling on the best possible explanation for what they point to, than insisting on 100% concrete evidence that satisfies our own varied demands. As humans we're uniquely equipped to search out truth, trust it, and live.

God has taken the initiative not only in equipping us this way, but also in revealing truth to us. *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever* (Deuteronomy 29:29). Let's look at some of the things He has revealed.

### **DAY THREE**

#### **Clues from Existence #1 - The Universe**

*God's invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So people are without excuse.* (Romans 1:20)

The most basic 'clue' that God exists is the fact that the universe (all Space, Time, Matter and Energy) exists. Where did it come from? What caused it to exist? Can things just pop into existence, from nothing, with no cause?

Throughout history, philosophers and scientists believed that the universe had *always* existed in one form or another. But, from 1927 scientists recognised that the universe had been expanding from a single point in the past. They calculated that it began to exist from nothing, 13.7 billion years ago. The 'Big Bang' became the 'standard model' in mainstream science and has remained so ever since. Alternatives (such as the 'multiverse' theory, and 'expansion/contraction' theories) all also ultimately require an absolute beginning to the universe.

Why is this significant? It gives strong clues to what caused the universe to exist:

- 1) Time began - so the cause must be timeless
- 2) Matter began - so the cause must be non-material
- 3) Energy began - so the cause must be powerful (to bring energy from nothing)
- 4) The universe began rather than always existing - so the cause must be a personal Being - that is, a mind, able to choose and to act.<sup>4 5</sup>

These clues can be recognised without involving the Bible. Yet they coincide with what the Bible says. *For God's invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made* (Romans 1:20).

- a) God is *invisible* - i.e non-material. <sup>6</sup>
- b) God's *power* is seen through creation - i.e He is powerful to bring energy from nothing.
- c) God's *power* is *eternal* - i.e. timeless. He has always existed, outside of time.
- d) God's *divine nature* - literally His 'god-ness', is seen through His capacity to choose, His decision to bring a universe into existence.

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<sup>4</sup> Why must the cause be 'a personal being with the capacity to think, choose and act?' Effects result from specific conditions. For example, at 0 degrees C (condition), water always freezes (effect). So if the conditions were there for a universe to exist, it should always have existed. But since the universe hasn't always existed, conditions must have been changed. In the absence of time, such a change requires an agent with the capacity to choose freely and to act accordingly.

<sup>5</sup> For those who reject mainstream science and continue to believe that the universe has always existed, consider this:

- a) The universe is expanding, and as it does so, its energy is being spread out increasingly evenly. When it reaches the point of 'maximum entropy' (when all the energy is completely even everywhere), life will be impossible. If the universe has always existed, that point should have already been reached, because the universe has had an infinity of time to reach it!
- b) An eternal universe would mean that an infinity of events have already happened. But while infinity exists as a mathematical concept, an infinity of things or of events can't actually exist. For example, if you have an infinity of money, and I take £1 from you, how much do you have left? The same amount of money - an infinity! The same if I *give* you £1. Actual infinities are absurd - and therefore so would be a universe eternal in the past.

<sup>6</sup> *God is spirit* (John 4:24)



An eternal, powerful Spirit that thinks, chooses and acts. Not just a cause, but a Personal Creator.<sup>7</sup>

Put more simply, if you are wearing a nice pair of shoes and I say to you, “Wow, those are nice shoes. Interesting that they just popped into existence with no designer, no one to make them, and no materials to make them from!” - you would think I was mad. And that’s just a pair of shoes! How much more the Universe. The simplest and most direct clue that God exists is that anything at all exists.

## **DAY FOUR**

### **Clues from Existence #2 - Life**

Scientists have discovered that the existence of this universe, which has permitted the development of life, depends on a set of ‘constants and quantities’ that are tuned to an incredible degree of mathematical precision. If even *one* of these constants varied by even a hair’s breadth, this universe, and thus all life in it, simply could not exist. For example:

- a) The force of gravity is determined by the ‘gravitational constant’. A variation in this constant of just 1 part in  $10^{60}$  would mean the universe would have expanded too rapidly for any stars, planets and any life, to exist, or would have collapsed in on itself with the same result. (To get a sense of how extraordinarily precise this number is, consider that since time began only  $10^{20}$  seconds have passed!).
- b) The expansion of the universe is driven by the ‘cosmological constant’. If its value changed by even 1 part in  $10^{120}$ , the universe would expand too rapidly or too slowly, and again, life could not exist.
- c) If the mass and energy of the early universe wasn’t evenly distributed (between photons, atoms, neutrinos and dark matter) to a precision of a stunning 1 part in  $10^{10}$  to the power of 123, life could not exist. Roger Penrose (Professor of Mathematics, Oxford University) notes, “*This is an extraordinary figure. One could not possibly even write the number down in full, in our ordinary denary (power of ten) notation: it would be one followed by ten to the power of 123 successive zeros! (That is a million billion billion billion billion billion billion billion billion zeros.)*”

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<sup>7</sup> Note that this Clue doesn’t go as far as to imply that the ‘Personal Creator’ wants any kind of ‘personal relationship’ with His (or its) creation. There are other clues pointing in this direction, which we will look at later.

It's only because these, and many other numbers, are so precisely balanced, that our life-permitting universe can exist. Dr Paul Davies (professor of theoretical physics, Adelaide University) wrote, "*The really amazing thing is not that life on earth is balanced on a knife-edge, but that the entire universe is balanced on a knife-edge, and would be total chaos if any of the natural 'constants' were off even slightly.*" Michael Turner, astrophysicist at the University of Chicago and Fermilab, describes the fine-tuning of the universe this way: "*The precision is as if one could throw a dart across the entire universe and hit a bulls eye one millimetre in diameter on the other side.*"

Why are these constants and quantities so precisely balanced, or 'finely-tuned' to permit life? There are three possible explanations:

a) **Necessity.** In other words, the constants and quantities *have* to be set to permit life in the universe; they just *couldn't* be set in a way that would not permit life. However, this is simply not the case. Any one of them could have been different, since they are not determined by the laws of nature. There's no reason or evidence to suggest that such precise balance is necessary, or in other words, that it simply has to happen. It's far more probable that a life-*prohibiting* universe would exist, rather than a life-*permitting* one (such as ours).

b) **Chance.** Didn't these constants and quantities just happen to all fall, luckily, within the life-permitting range? Like playing the National Lottery - the chances of winning are slim, but someone has to win, don't they? However, given the mathematical precision involved in making a life-permitting universe possible, the chances of this happening are like winning a lottery where the odds are one in a billion, billion, billion.<sup>8</sup>

c) **Design.** Neither necessity, nor chance, provide satisfactory explanations for the incredible fine-tuning of our life-permitting universe. It seems reasonable to deduce that it was deliberately designed this way. Stephen Hawking wrote, "*The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers (i.e. the constants of physics) seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life*" (A Brief History of Time, p.125).

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<sup>8</sup> Some people try to increase the odds through the idea of a 'Universe Generator' that generates many different universes (the 'multi-verse'). If this were true, the odds of life-permitting universes coming about would be greater. However, there is absolutely no scientific evidence for such a thing; and the 'universe generator' would itself require an enormous amount of fine-tuning!

Sir Fred Hoyle wrote, “*A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintendent has monkeyed with the physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. I do not believe that any physicist who examined the evidence could fail to draw the inference that the laws of nuclear physics have been deliberately designed with regard to the consequences they produce within stars.*” John Wheeler, former President of the American Physical society, wrote, “*To my mind, there must be at the bottom of it all, not an utterly simple equation, but an utterly simple IDEA. And to me that idea, when we finally discover it, will be so compelling, and so inevitable, so beautiful, we will all say to each other, ‘How could it have ever been otherwise?’*” To have a design idea and then put it into effect requires a Being.

King David (who wrote many of the Psalms in the Bible) was not a physicist, but his conclusion was the same: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge* (Psalm 19:1-2). *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; my soul knows it very well* (Psalm 139:14). The fine-tuning of the universe to permit and encourage life is best explained by the work of a Designer.

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## INTERLUDE

We’ll now look now at how our sense of right and wrong, our sense that life has purpose, our sense that human life is valuable, and our longing for relationships are clues towards God. As we look, please remember that the question is not ‘*How did we get a sense of right and wrong, purpose, value, and the need for community?*’ It’s quite possible that evolution has played a role in that; indeed, having a sense of morality, purpose, value and community helps our survival as individuals and as a species.

Rather, the question is whether that’s *all* these things are - just ideas that help us survive and get through life; or whether they have a more solid basis than that - is right *really* ‘right’ and wrong *really* ‘wrong’; does life *really* have purpose and value; is our longing for relationships *more* than just a survival instinct?

## DAY FIVE

### Clues from Morality

“*We should be kind to others.*” Why? If we’re nothing more than atoms in motion, nothing more than an intelligent animal species, why should we have any moral values and duties? Yes, it may feel good to treat others well. It may help society to function and thus the species to survive. But in that case, right and wrong are just *conveniences* - rather than standards by which everyone has a *duty* to live. Being kind is more *convenient* than being cruel. And if at some point it becomes *inconvenient* to be kind - well, what would be wrong with being cruel instead?

If God doesn’t exist, then the philosopher Michael Ruse is correct in saying that “*morality is a collective illusion foisted on us by our genes.*”<sup>9</sup> Ideas of right and wrong are a ‘useful fiction’.

In recent years, philosophers have worked hard to try to find some foundation for morality, some way to explain why right and wrong are true standards which we have a *duty* to respect, rather than just convenient illusions.<sup>10</sup> Yet they’ve been unable to escape the fact that if God doesn’t exist, morality is entirely *subjective* (ideas of right and wrong are nothing more than the product of people’s minds) rather than *objective* (mind-independent standards that apply to everyone, everywhere, at all times).

Is morality subjective or objective? At the end of the day, you know it’s objective. For example, you know that even if everyone in the world thought that it was right to torture babies, it would still be wrong. This is an *objective moral value*; it’s a standard that applies to everyone, everywhere, at all times, regardless of their own viewpoint.

Furthermore, you know that if you witnessed someone torturing a baby and had the power to stop them, you *should* do so (whether you feel like it or not). This is an *objective moral duty*.

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Ruse, ‘Taking Darwin Seriously’ (New York: Blackwell 1986), 253

<sup>10</sup> Current theories argue that morality has a survival benefit to groups. Individuals who display immoral behaviour are punished by the group; hence immorality confers a negative survival advantage. However, while this shows that morality is ‘useful’, it doesn’t show that it’s not a ‘fiction.’ It doesn’t explain why right is actually *right* (not just ‘convenient’), and wrong is actually *wrong* (not just ‘inconvenient’).

So, objective moral values and duties *do* exist. This is a major clue to both the existence and the nature of God. If God, the Creator, does not exist, then mankind is nothing more than atoms in motion, so moral values are indeed a '*collective illusion*'. If there is no moral authority higher than mankind, then our sense of moral duty is nothing more than a 'useful fiction'.

But if God exists, and if He is a moral God, then moral values and duties don't depend on man's invention. They are objective, not subjective. Since experience tells us that objective moral values and duties *do* exist, then God the Creator must exist.

Please note, the question is not "*Can someone be moral without believing in God?*". Of course you can have moral values, and perform moral duties, without believing in God. Nor is the question "*Where did we get our sense of moral values and duties from?*" We can learn morality from many sources - intuition, parents, society, possibly evolution.

The question is what moral values and duties are *based on*; whether they have any *ultimate authority*. If they're nothing more than the product of human minds, then ultimately no particular idea of right and wrong has any more authority than the other. If one society believes it's wrong to torture babies, and another believes it's right; neither actually has any more authority for their viewpoint than the other.

But if it's *objectively* wrong to torture babies, and *objectively* right to protect them; if kindness is objectively better than cruelty, then God must exist. What's more, He must be a moral God who is good. - because these values and duties are good.

## **DAY SIX**

### **Clues from Purpose**

*I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. (Ecclesiastes 1:14)*

It would be absolutely pointless wasting any effort trying to chase after and catch the wind. Yet if we are nothing more than atoms in motion; if there is no God and no afterlife, then not only we, but the whole universe and everything that happens in it ultimately has no meaning or purpose. It's not going anywhere - except towards an eventual death and subsequent oblivion.

Everything that you've ever done or will ever do, ultimately comes to absolutely nothing. Everything is vanity - just like a mist that appears and then disappears - and so everything that is done on earth is, indeed, just like chasing the wind. We may run around imagining our decisions and actions have some kind of lasting significance, - but they can't, because in the end, everything comes to nothing. *"If God is dead, then man is dead too"* (Francis Schaeffer).

This isn't to say that we can't come up with a purpose for living. Some live for personal pleasure; some live to help others; some have given up on both those ideas and just do whatever it takes in order to survive. But ultimately, if God doesn't exist, then whether we live for ourselves or for others, it all ends up in absolute nothingness. Blank, meaningless, pointless nothingness. Any purpose we feel life has is, at the end of the day, a complete illusion.

This is a hard truth to face. In fact, it's so hard that no-one can actually live honestly in the light of it. Everyone has to come up with some 'reason' to live and to put one foot in front of the other. (Even those who say, *"Oh well, I have no meaning or purpose"* still come up with reasons to live). Several atheist philosophers acknowledge that to live this way is an illusion; to do this, we have to live in denial.<sup>11</sup> The majority of people, however, never recognise that they are doing this, because the sense that life has purpose is so much part of what it is to be human. We know there is purpose, so we try to find one.

Why are you even reading this booklet? Why bother? If life has no ultimate meaning, what's the point in even thinking about what's really true? Why waste your time on that? But most likely you do have a sense that life has purpose; that it's more than just living and dying and oblivion. You know that the bleak prospect of a meaningless existence just doesn't ring true. Indeed, *God has put eternity into man's heart* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

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<sup>11</sup> We are confronted with *'the bare, valueless fact of existence'* (Jean Paul Sartre). We must build our lives on *'The firm foundation of unyielding despair.'* (Bertrand Russell). *'There is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pointless indifference... We are machines for propagating DNA... It's every living object's sole reason for being.'* (Richard Dawkins). It's telling that even in describing propagating DNA as being our 'reason for being', Dawkins is creating an illusion of purpose! If God doesn't exist, then the survival of the species isn't some kind of purpose - it's just what happens. We're just machines that *happen* to propagate!

The very fact that you - or anyone else - would consider or discuss 'purpose', is a strong clue to the fact that life does in fact have ultimate purpose. And since life can only have ultimate purpose if God exists, it's another evidence not only that He exists, but that He has created mankind - yourself included - for a particular reason.

Jesus expressed this purpose very clearly. He said, *God loved the people He created so much that He gave His only Son, so that whoever puts their trust in Him won't come to nothing, but will have eternal life... This is what eternal life is - to know God and His Son Jesus Christ is a personal, loving relationship* (John 3:16; 17:3). According to Jesus, God loves you and wants a permanent, eternal relationship with you. That's the core reason that you exist. With that relationship in place, everything else in life has ultimate meaning as well.

Your sense that life matters - that it's not just chasing the wind - points you towards the source of purpose and meaning - Jesus Christ himself.

## **DAY SEVEN**

### **Clues from Value**

*You shall not murder.*  
(Deuteronomy 5:17)

Most people believe it's wrong to murder. Why is it wrong? Because every human life has value. To take someone's life through murder is to steal the most precious thing they possess - life itself. Of course, believing that each life has value, we go further than just not murdering. We claim that people should be treated with dignity and respect, tolerance and fairness. We may even go so far as agreeing with Jesus that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves (and Jesus made it clear that everyone is our neighbour!). A high standard - but you and I know it's right.

All of our principles about treating others well are necessarily based on the simple belief that each person has *inherent* worth and value. The word 'inherent' comes from the Latin '*inherent*', meaning 'sticking to'. In other words, worth and value 'stick to you', simply because you are human. It is a sign of a sick and twisted society if certain people are seen as having less value than others - think of Hitler's Germany, Mao's China, the treatment of minority groups in war-torn Syria, or modern day slavery in our own country. Something inside us revolts against such cruel and inhuman treatment of others, because we know those lives are precious and should be treated as such.

But why is life precious? Why do we have inherent worth and value? Where does it come from? If I take a piece of paper and write ‘£5 sterling’ on it, the bank will not accept it as having any monetary value. Why? Because there’s nothing to back it up. Similarly, what backs up our value as human beings?

If God doesn’t exist, we are nothing more than accidental by-products of nature. We are no more special and have no more worth than an insect, a rock, or a crumpled piece of paper. We may feel we have worth, we may act as if we have worth, but ultimately there’s nothing to back that feeling up. It’s just another nice idea that helps us get by.<sup>12</sup> If this is true, then in reality you are worth nothing. Human worth, value and dignity are nothing more than useful fictions. You might not like it if someone treats you like dirt - but they’re not doing anything wrong, because ultimately you are just dirt.

Hopefully you’re very uncomfortable with that idea; because you know that in reality you, along with every human being, *do* have inherent worth and so *should* be treated with dignity and respect. Not just because it’s a good idea to be treated and to treat others this way; but because that’s actually the only *right* thing to do.

Yet the only way this can be true - the only way human worth and dignity can be anything more than ‘useful fictions’ - is if God exists and is the one who backs up our value. So, inherent human worth, value and dignity is another clue for you that God exists, and that He is good.

The Bible expresses this very clearly. According to Psalm 139, God formed each one of us - body and soul- in our mother’s womb. *You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made... How precious are your thoughts towards me O God!* And then God gave His precious, only Son Jesus to die on our behalf so that we could have eternal life. *God made His love clear to us by sending His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him* (1 John 4:9). If this is true, you are as valuable to God as His Son Jesus Christ is. Jesus Christ is the measure of the worth and value of every human being.

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<sup>12</sup> Is a sense of worth a by-product of evolution? Certainly the belief that humans have inherent worth helps us co-operate and thus survive as a species. But the question is not, ‘Where did we get our sense of inherent worth from?’ Rather, the question is, ‘Do we actually have any worth or is that just a nice idea?’ If it is just a nice, useful idea, then in reality you are worth nothing. And there’s no reason for anyone to treat you as if you’re worth anything, other than for convenience.



## DAY EIGHT

### Clues from Longing

*It is not good that the man should be alone.* (Genesis 2:18)

*God has set eternity into mankind's heart.* (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

*Jesus cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink'.* (John 7:37)

Human beings are social creatures. While we may sometimes enjoy time to ourselves, we all need friendships and relationships; we need to not be alone. If that need isn't satisfied, we suffer. That's why in prison, enforced solitary confinement for extended periods of time can cause such deep emotional anguish and mental damage.

We long to love and to be loved. Very few people, on their death bed, will say, "*I wish I'd spent more time at the office.*" Many will say, "*I wish I'd spent more time with the people I care for.*"

Without loving relationship, life is barren, bare and bleak. Equally, if we do find good friendships and relationships, they can be very fulfilling.<sup>13</sup>

Yet most people will admit, if honest, that even enjoying the most special human friendships and relationships, something still seems to be missing. We long for something more in terms of relationship, which that special person can't completely satisfy. This longing is a clue pointing us towards God.

Jesus said, *Just as the living Father sent me, I live because of the Father* (John 6:57). He claimed that His whole life depended on His relationship with God the Father. He devoted His life to addressing what He saw as a need within every human being to be in a similar relationship with God the Father.

To help clarify what this relationship means, Jesus said *'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.'* (John 4:24). In other words, God is Spirit, so a relationship with God is a spiritual relationship. We were made for this - hence our longing that no human relationship can satisfy.

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<sup>13</sup> This ties in with the Biblical account of creation. We're told that God created mankind in His own image. God Himself is characterised by community - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, living in an eternal relationship of love. So to be 'made in His image' means we're also characterised by community. (See John 17:24; Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:1-3, 18.)

Some people deny that there's any such spiritual dimension to being human. The vast majority, though, say they're aware of it, and may in fact long for it, although they may not be sure how to live in it.

Jesus addressed the 'how' directly when He said, *Unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unless he is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God* (John 3:3,5). In other words, to enter into this spiritual relationship with God, we have to be 'born from above.' God's Spirit has to come and live in us. Then the channels of spiritual communication are opened up, and that life and love can flow from God to us, and from us back to God.

Our longing for community with others ties in with the claims of the Bible regarding God existing as a God of relationship and creating us in His image. When we consider this longing in our souls to connect with something *more than* human friendships and relationships; the longing for spiritual encounter with God, this becomes a clue pointing firmly in His direction.<sup>14</sup>

According to Jesus, this spiritual encounter is available to us through Him. He said, *I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to God the Father except through Me. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him* (John 14:6, 23).

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<sup>14</sup> Does our longing for community confer an evolutionary survival advantage? It probably does. . How about our longing for spiritual relationship with God? That may also benefit some people, motivating them towards survival. But the fact that it confers advantages like this does not show that such a longing isn't based in reality. The best explanation for this longing, and for the advantages conferred by it, are that we are in fact designed this way; that we have a genuine need for God.

## DAY NINE

### Clues from Jesus

*Long ago, at many times and in many pieces, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son. (Hebrews 1:1)*

*This is my beloved Son, listen to Him. (Mark 9:7)*

The word ‘clue’ comes from the Late Middle English word ‘*clen*’, indicating a ball of thread, used to guide a person out of a maze or a labyrinth. If we follow the clues, we should ultimately be able to come out of the maze and draw a *conclusion*.

The word ‘conclusion’ comes via Middle English, where it meant ‘to convince’, and originates in the Latin ‘*concludere*’, meaning to completely shut something. So far we’ve looked at a variety of clues towards God’s existence, and what kind of God He must be. Are we convinced yet, and ready to close the case? Or is there more to be said?

If God has spoken to us through Existence, Morality, Purpose, Value, and Longing, is that enough, or does He need to say more? Is it enough to recognise that He is the good, moral, Creator and source of Life itself? That our life has value and purpose, which is found in human community, but can only be complete when we are in a spiritual relationship with God? All of these clues are immensely important - but is there more to be said?

The answer to these questions, according to the Bible, is that there is most definitely more to be said. The clues are incomplete without God coming to earth in the person of His Son Jesus, and so revealing Himself ‘up close and personal’ to mankind.

Jesus went so far as to claim that “*I and the Father are One. Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father*” (John 10:30, 14:9). In other words, if you want a clear picture of what God is like, look at Jesus. He’s the perfect expression of God - God’s Word spoken to us in a language we can understand. God reveals Himself in Creation, morality, and our human needs and longings - but He most fully reveals Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

Most people would say that Jesus Christ was a *special person*. They may just have a general sense that He was good; or they may have looked into Him a bit further and noticed:

- His kindness in dealing with the poor and downtrodden
- His courage in confronting the powerful and hypocritical
- The way His moral teachings ring so true; His consistency in living what He preached
- His perceptiveness in always addressing the heart of the matter and not just the surface appearance
- His constant call to self-sacrificial love, and then demonstrating that same love by giving up His own life
- His refusal to fear or favour anyone, but rather to call on everyone to surrender their lives to God.

Through the centuries Jesus has been revered; and of those who don't revere Him, most will at least acknowledge that He was a good man who set a good example.

This is strange though, because Jesus made some very, very uncomfortable statements:

- He claimed that unless we 'eat His flesh and drink His blood', we have 'no life' in us - isn't that extremely weird? (John 6:53)
- He praised a woman for pouring expensive perfume on Him, when the money could have been given to the poor - isn't that utterly selfish? (Matthew 26:6-11)
- He happily allowed people to worship Him - isn't that the height of arrogance and self-deluded pride? (Matthew 14:33; 28:16-17)
- He told His closest followers that He hadn't come to bring peace to the earth but division - even turning family members against each other - isn't that plain cruelty? (Luke 12:51-53)

These sayings only make sense:

- If He is the Son of God, worthy of worship (thus letting people worship Him)
- If we really, desperately need Him in our lives (the meaning of having ‘no life’ in us if we don’t ‘eat His flesh and drink His blood’)
- If what matters most of all is our relationship to God, whatever our circumstances might be (hence the symbolism of allowing the perfume to be spent on Him)
- If following Him does set us on a path that’s so opposite, so contrary to what many people hold dear in life (which would explain why families may become divided over Him).

If any of these things is not true, then He was not a good person. He was a self-deluded, manipulative hypocrite.<sup>15</sup>

Why then, does He still command such respect across the world, even from those who categorically deny that they will follow Him? Perhaps it’s because we know, when we look at who Jesus was, what He said and did, that the best possible explanation is that indeed, God was revealing Himself to the world through this unique Man; and that whether His life and words are reassuring to us or most uncomfortable, we must listen to Him.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Or, the accounts of what He said and did have been so corrupted that we couldn’t hope to have any real idea of who He was - so we may as well forget Him. But taking a historical approach to the documentation we have about Him, we have every good reason to trust that the accounts are trustworthy. **For a short yet thorough look at the historicity of Jesus and the reliability of the Bible accounts about Him, it’s well worth reading R.T France ‘The Evidence for Jesus.’**

<sup>16</sup> The fact that what Jesus said and stood for may make us uncomfortable serves to further strengthen the case for His identity as God’s revelation to us. As morally imperfect people, we should expect that a morally perfect God would challenge our thinking and our behaviour. If He only said things that made us feel good, it would be much more likely that He was just another man simply wanting to attract a popular following, rather than God, who truly wants to put us on the right path.

## DAY TEN

### Clues from Jesus #2

Every New Year people make resolutions - committing themselves to a better diet, or more exercise, or to improve in some other way. Most people have a general sense that they should be a 'better person'. Maybe more kind, more thoughtful, more understanding, more courageous, more interested in others; less self-obsessed, less dismissive of others, less fretful, less indecisive.

We might be quite satisfied with who we are, thinking we're quite good people; but in moments of honesty we admit that we fall short of what we should be. We know we should be better people.

Jesus addressed this universal trait in a completely unique way.

1) He acknowledged that we fall far short of what we should be. *I told you that you will die in your sins* (John 8:24) *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person.* (Matt 15:19)

2) He made it clear that actually, we're a lot worse off than we think. *You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You shall not murder.'* *But I say to you, if you're even angry with someone, you're subject to judgement... and if you curse someone, you're in danger of the fires of hell* (Matt 5:21-23).

3) He pointed out that we are broken, and despite our best efforts, we can't repair ourselves. *I haven't come to call those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners, to repent* (Luke 5:32).

4) He gave *Himself* to us as the solution. He would be crucified on our behalf. He would pay for our sins through His death (so justice would be done), and through His resurrection He would offer us new life (and so we would be changed by God's love and power). *When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself* (John 12:32). *The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 6:23). *Those who receive the super-abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:17).

Everyone feels there's a standard they've not reached; and that they should try harder. Religions go further and teach that *maybe* if we manage to reach this standard we *just might* reach God. Jesus taught the opposite. God reaches us.

There is indeed a beautiful, glorious standard of genuine love. We can't fully reach the standard, no matter how hard we try; we can't build a pathway to heaven. In His love for us, God reaches out to us. He gives us the *gift* of His Son Jesus. In Jesus there is complete forgiveness. In Jesus the standard of goodness is met - because He meets it for us. In Jesus there is new life - not just a second chance, but the life and love of God Himself given to us to live by. Our part is simply to receive this gift of Jesus.

Not just Jesus' words, but also His actions in dying and rising again for us demonstrate that God loves us. His resurrection confirms that His words were true, and that His death achieved exactly what He claimed it would. So how do we know that He rose from the dead?

## **DAY ELEVEN**

### **Clues from the Resurrection**

If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and is alive today, little room for doubt is left about God's existence, about who He is., and about what He wants to do for us. So let's look first at evidence from history regarding Jesus' resurrection.

Very, very few scholars dispute the Bible's claims that Jesus' tomb was found empty by some of His women followers, on the first day of the week after His crucifixion. But don't those scholars realise the Gospel writers maybe just made it up? There are tell-tale signs to indicate that they didn't make it up.

1) The fact that women were the first to discover His empty tomb adds weight to the reliability of the story - since in that time and culture, women's testimony was not trusted! So why would the Gospel writers therefore choose women to be the first witnesses, if they knew people would immediately be prejudiced against the very thing they were trying to claim? This underlines the genuineness both of the writers' motives and of their account.

2) The religious leaders, confronted with the problem that they'd had a man executed and now His tomb was empty, paid the guards to spread the story that the disciples had stolen the body. This confirms that they did in fact have an empty tomb to deal with.

3) The simple fact that the tomb was empty goes a long way to confirming His resurrection. If His followers had wanted to pretend He'd risen, why bother including His body? Why not just claim that His spirit or soul had risen? Surely that would have been much, much easier.

4) The earliest written records of His resurrection date from within 20 years of the event, and the full accounts had all been written down by the end of that century. Meanwhile the accounts would have been very widely known through oral tradition (the meticulously careful passing-on of information by word of mouth). If the tomb had in fact not been found empty, those spreading the stories would have easily, quickly, and publicly, been discredited. The tomb could have been opened and the body produced - or the Roman authorities could have been called upon to confirm that no-one had in fact left the tomb.

## **DAY TWELVE**

### **Clues from the Resurrection #2**

After the tomb was found empty, Jesus' earliest disciples then repeatedly experienced Him appearing to them, over a period of 40 days.

Again, virtually no scholar denies that they had these experiences, and that at least the disciples *believed* that God had truly raised Him from the dead.

1) These were physical appearances - Jesus ate and drank with them. On one occasion He did this specifically to show that they weren't just seeing a ghost or an illusion (Luke 24:42-43).

Yet there was absolutely no expectation within Jewish religion and culture that anyone would rise physically from the dead before the final judgement. So Jesus rising from the dead in this way would have cut right across His own disciples' firmly held beliefs about what does and doesn't happen. They came to sincerely believe that the Jesus appearing to them was in fact the same Jesus that had been crucified and died.



2) What's more, they believed He was the promised Messiah -the Saviour. This also went against their accepted views - no-one expected a Messiah who would suffer and die at the hands of His enemies rather than winning a glorious victory over them. The disciples did not expect, and were not looking for, a dying and rising Saviour.<sup>17</sup>

3) Some claim that the disciples lied about His resurrection. But if they just got together and decided to make this up, what benefit would that have been to them? Why spend the rest of their lives spreading a conscious lie that won them persecution, torture, and execution? Yes, we know that religion can deceive people into doing such extraordinary things - but usually that's when a person has believed a lie someone else has told, not something they've deliberately and consciously made up themselves.

4) Others claim Jesus only apparently died, and that somehow He made His way out of the tomb Himself. Yet the Romans were skilled executioners. They could tell when they had done their job! And the idea that a man who had been tortured all night while on trial, then nailed to a piece of wood in the scorching heat for 6 hours until losing all consciousness, then being pierced in His side with a Roman spear, could somehow revive and manage not only to roll away a large stone from His own tomb, but also overpower the armed guards on duty, is obviously laughable.

5) Others say Jesus' body was moved from His tomb to a common graveyard, and that the disciples therefore only thought He had risen. However this doesn't explain His appearances to them; or why as soon as they started proclaiming His resurrection someone didn't correct them and explain what had actually happened.

6) Some claim the appearances to the disciples were just hallucinations. Yet this doesn't explain the empty tomb; or why they believed Jesus had appeared physically to them (people who 'see' their deceased loved ones know they are

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<sup>17</sup> 'The notion that a god might have suffered torture and death on a cross was so shocking as to appear repulsive. Familiarity with the biblical narrative of the Crucifixion has dulled our sense of just how completely novel a deity Christ was. In the ancient world, it was the role of gods who laid claim to ruling the universe to uphold its order by inflicting punishment – not to suffer it themselves...' (Tom Holland, 'The New Statesman' 14 September 2016).

not physically alive!). In the context of their Jewish faith, if the disciples had hallucinated they wouldn't have expected to see Jesus alive and well on earth, but rather they would have visions of Him in heaven.

Further, the number of people who saw Him, at different times, places and contexts, far, far outweighs anything found in psychological case studies of hallucination. Especially when we take into account that skeptics like His brother James (who did not believe in His claims before His death) also saw Him and came to believe; as did some of His enemies, like Saul.<sup>18</sup>

7) Finally, doesn't it make sense, that if God created mankind, complete with our bodies, then His plan would be for our whole being (body and soul) to go on existing? The account of creation in Genesis says that God *saw everything He had made and it was very good...* (Genesis 1:31) If the human body is good, why throw it away? Indeed, this is a key part of the good news of the Christian Gospel. The body is good, and God's plan is for everyone who trusts in Him to live forever, not as some kind of disembodied souls, but as complete human beings.

Taken together, these observations demonstrate that the best explanation for the empty tomb, the disciples' belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus, and the early origins of the Christian faith, is that it actually happened!

If we can acknowledge that God exists, we can easily acknowledge that He *could* have raised Jesus from the dead. And if we look at the evidence, it's not difficult to conclude that He in fact *did so*.

We've examined the historical basis for the resurrection; what about contemporary evidence, that helps confirm He is alive today?

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<sup>18</sup> It's a weak argument to claim that Saul felt some kind of guilt about what had been done to Jesus and His followers - Saul was most zealous in his life as a Jewish religious leader, with no reason to radically turn around and end up deliberately exposing himself to tremendous suffering in order to preach the risen Jesus.

## DAY THIRTEEN

### Clues from the Resurrection #3

There are literally countless examples of people, both well-known and unknown, throughout history, who claim to know that Jesus Christ is alive because He has changed their lives and continues to change lives. Not only through His teachings but also through His power. Perhaps you know someone like this - maybe you have even seen the changes in their life. I can't speak for them. But I can speak for myself.

*Thirty-five years ago, I surrendered my life to Jesus. I had become convinced that He is alive, and that the claims of the Bible regarding Him are true. This was a process, which began with my two elder sisters asking Him into their lives. I saw such a tremendous change in them - from loneliness, anger, fear and depression, to a settled state of joy, peace, courage, and love for God and for all others, such as I had never witnessed before. I was very skeptical, but as the weeks went by and I saw them live out this change in the midst of very trying circumstances, my skepticism softened.*

*They explained the message of the Gospel to me:*

- *God created the universe and mankind, so we could live in loving relationship with Him*
- *We have all sinned - gone our own way rather than God's way*
- *Jesus, the Son of God became human, and died on the cross to pay for our wrongdoing*
- *He rose from the dead, is alive today, and sends His Holy Spirit to live in all who turn to Him for forgiveness and the gift of eternal life, bringing us back into loving relationship with Him for ever*

*As I observed the changes in my sisters, and the love, joy, life and peace that they now lived in; and as I analysed the claims of the Gospel, I became convinced that indeed, Jesus had died and risen again to bring us eternal life.*

*So I decided to surrender my life to Him also; to ask His forgiveness for having lived away from Him, and to ask Him to come into my life and make His home in me for ever.*

*Immediately I noticed some changes. My language, which had been as foul as I could make it, cleaned up right away - without any effort on my part at all. The hatred which I held in my heart towards certain persons was gone; and in its place I had the power and the capacity to genuinely love them. This was a miracle. As I began to read the Bible, it started making sense to me as it never had before.*

*Other things took longer to change. My tendency towards outbursts of anger remained (although much less frequent). Over time, as I came to understand more fully God's presence with me and His love for me, those also disappeared. Additionally, God completely healed me of anorexia.*

*Thirty-five years after I first asked Jesus into my life, He is as real and present with me today as back then. Every day I recognise more of who He is, and He interacts with me - guiding me, encouraging me, strengthening me, correcting me, loving me. Jesus is alive.*

*You may not know me personally. Perhaps you do know someone else who claims that Jesus lives in them and has changed them. They may not be perfect - but perhaps they seem to have something that you don't. Could it be something that you were also created to have - a personal, powerful, permanent relationship with the living God? (Peter Bellingham, Pastor, The Well Christian Church, Shrewsbury)*

## **DAY FOURTEEN**

### **Clues from the Resurrection #4**

We've looked at historical clues to the reality of Jesus' resurrection; and I've shared some of my personal story as a present-day clue. Let's reinforce the evidence from the present day, with a few more testimonies from people who claim that Jesus is alive and has changed them. These people are from very different backgrounds and walks in life; the common denominator is that I personally know them all. If you would like to get in touch with any of them to ask more about their story, feel free to contact us.

*Before becoming a physician I enjoyed courses in biology, chemistry, & physics. Biochemistry was my favourite. Most of these courses were taught by university professors who were atheists. During the first year of University I became an atheist.*

*The following summer I began to process what had been taught. Since I have not been everywhere in the universe or beyond, I concluded that it was intellectually dishonest to assume there is no god. Atheism is as much a belief system as any other religion. I then became an agnostic. There is a difference between (1) an agnostic who sincerely is interested in searching for truth (2) one who is Post-Modern & doesn't believe truth exists, or (3) one who accepts a Post-Truth paradigm & just doesn't care. As a member of the third group my biochemistry professor admitted the evidence was strong for intelligent design, but he didn't want a God who might require a change in lifestyle.*

*Reflecting on evolution from a biochemical standpoint & particularly energy transport & the genetics needed to control protein synthesis, feedback loops, etc., I was stunned by the complexity. The amount of genetic change required at the same time on both the X & Y chromosomes in order for sexual differentiation to function to reproduce the organism was thought provoking. I did not have enough faith to believe this was all by chance rather than intelligent design.*

*I then took a fresh look at the New Testament & a book titled THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT by Josh McDowell. Based on the evidence I became a follower of Jesus & now serve the poor in Developing World countries. (Dr. Larry Whiting)*

*After a long search for meaning in life through politics, philosophy, the arts etc. one common denominator emerged, the person of Jesus Christ who claimed to be the way, truth and life, also the resurrection and life. By putting these claims to the test I found them to be true and through a supernatural act of God's Spirit I was transformed inwardly and became what the Bible calls a "new creation in Christ". I now had purpose, for I was created by Him and for Him. I have inward peace and hope for the future. (Ian Clarke, Store Clerk)*

*The love, strengthening and comfort that my relationship with Jesus brings has enabled me to walk through very difficult times in my life, the sudden death of my husband and a period of chronic pain, situations that I could not face or endure in my own strength. The sweetness of His comfort brings a deep balm and a healing to the soul. Mere ideas or theories will not achieve this. It is a very real relationship. (Kate DeBoer, Language Teacher)*

*Life without Jesus was empty, racked by a deep nagging sense that something was wrong, and had no definite purpose or direction. Life with Him is markedly different. Although life can at times be mundane, although there is still drudgery and the daily grind, there is a deep abiding joy and an inner peace. These at times may get stifled with cares and worries but He is always there to bring me through. (James Pilsworth, Insurance Agent)*

*Before I became a Christian 28 years ago, my life seemed to travel along a dark tunnel. Occasionally, when something good was about to happen (or so I would think) a small light would appear in the distance and give me some hope that things were going to change for the better. What would invariably happen, however, is that the tunnel would make a turn and the light would disappear; until the next time. When I became a Christian I walked out of that tunnel into a stadium with brilliant sunshine, green grass and fresh air; and the stadium was full of life and activity. I have never had to go back into that tunnel again. That's what Jesus did for me. (Harry Price, Church Worker)*

*I knew when I accepted Christ into my life that I was not alone now, and with the challenges of life He would be with me. (Joy Bellingham, Homemaker, Artist)*

*Like many 17 year olds in this day and age, I am someone who easily becomes anxious about situations in life, and about the future and what it holds. The living Lord Jesus has made a tremendous reversal in how I perceive stressful situations and the unknown future. The words - "I want you to be free from anxieties"[1 Corinthians 7:32] have not only been words of encouragement to me over the years, but most importantly they have pointed to the source of abundant life of Him who has a specific, beautiful, and intricate plan for every day of my life. "In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:16) (Amy, Student)*

*Christ gripped my heart many years ago; but I still remember before that: the empty hollowness, the inability to be truly happy, the paralysing moments of fear about the future, about death, the sense that on the other side of some invisible wall there were answers to all questions, the sense of darkness surrounding most everything. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4-5)*

*I gave myself to Christ understanding almost nothing about Him. And now somehow, mysteriously, light has replaced the darkness. I remember well being blind, but now, much to my wonder and joy, I can see. (Mark Hammond, Music Producer, Nashville)*

*I was brought up in the Welsh chapel culture, where the presence and status of a church building was revered as being far more important than faith or relationship with Jesus. I always acknowledged that there was a God, but even in that He definitely didn't seem relevant or necessary to me or to my family.*

*As a teenager I was dragged along to church and went through the weekly motion of religious duty; attending the building formed part of my ritual to God - but I realised (after a whole lot of stress, effort and time) that I was doing all this, while having no living relationship with Jesus - I didn't see Him as my Lord and Saviour.*

*In my early 20's I had some surgery that meant I lost the use of my legs and had to adapt to life in a wheelchair. I came to realise that Jesus was the only adequate answer to the difficult challenges of life. I no longer had to manage it all alone, in my own 'weak' strength. I accepted Him as my Lord and Saviour and have known Him since as my strength, even in my weakness. (Daniel Jenkins, Pastor, Wellspring Apostolic Church, Shrewsbury)*

## INTERLUDE

We have looked at clues to God's existence from Existence, Morality, Purpose, Value, Longing, and from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Perhaps nothing more needs to be added to the evidences already presented.

However, if you will bear with me a little longer on this journey, I believe it will be profitable to look at some more.

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### DAY FIFTEEN Clues from Suffering

*"If God exists, then why do we suffer?"* This is the most powerful, common, and personal question ever raised by those considering whether or not it makes sense to believe in God.

- It's the most *powerful* question because if God exists as the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving Creator, why would He even create a world where suffering is possible, or why would He not stop it happening?
- It's the most *common* question, because everyone experiences some level of pain and sorrow in the course of their life, and we're all aware of how much others suffer.
- It's the most *personal* question, because when suffering invades our lives (illness, tragedy or loss in our own life or - even worse - the life of someone we love dearly), it reaches the most intimate parts of our heart.

Because it can be such a painful, personal question, please do not think that anything we say here is intended to trivialise or make light of anything you, or anyone you know, suffers.

At the same time, please understand that precisely because it's such a powerful, common, and personal question, it must be addressed directly.

- If God does not exist, suffering is just to be expected. Ultimately we are merely atoms in motion, struggling to survive in a hostile, mindless, purposeless universe. On that view, suffering is not surprising, and it's not unjust. Why get upset about it?

Yet the very fact that it feels so wrong to us, that we know things ideally should *not* be this way and we cry out, 'Unfair!' is a clue towards God's existence.<sup>19</sup>

- In no way does suffering call into question whether a Creator God of *some sort* exists. It just calls into question what sort of God He is. For example, God could be cruel and sadistic, deliberately creating a suffering world for His own pleasure. Or He could be indifferent - just not caring at all about the welfare of the beings He's made.
- If, however, God exists as the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God revealed in the gospel of Jesus, several truths become clear:
  - God is utterly good and loving. Therefore, the blame for suffering must be placed elsewhere - not on Him.
    - Ultimate responsibility lies with spiritual forces of evil that oppose God (forces which Jesus openly confronted); and with mankind (we have chosen our way, not God's - thus we regularly induce suffering, through man's inhumanity to man).
  - God is not only all-powerful, etc, but He is also all-wise. This means He can have good, moral, loving reasons for allowing suffering which we may not understand.
  - According to the Biblical account God created the best kind of world possible to permit people to live in the joy and fulfilment of loving relationship with Him. This had to include the possibility of suffering - because it had to include people being given free choice as to how we would live, and whether we would love.

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<sup>19</sup> Our desire to avoid suffering could be explained as nothing more than a by-product of evolution (part of the survival instinct seen in all species.) Our sense of 'justice' and 'injustice' would help reinforce this survival instinct. But in that case, we would have to believe that nothing is ever *actually* 'unfair' or 'unjust'. Right and wrong, justice and injustice would be *complete and total illusions*.

And just because we possibly gained our sense of justice and injustice through evolutionary processes does nothing to show that they aren't based in objective reality. In fact, in creating mankind, God could well have used such processes to help develop appropriate survival mechanisms within us - including, in this case, the ability to empathise with and care for others because we ourselves know what it's like to suffer.



- “Yes,” you may respond, “*but God is still responsible for creating the world, knowing that man would rebel and suffering would ensue... so it’s still his fault.*” If a young person chooses to live an utterly selfish life, harming many others, do we blame his parents for deciding to have a child in the first place? That would be most unfair! Of course, unlike God, they couldn’t see ahead to the choices the child would make. But they knew it was possible their child would turn out badly; and still decided it was worth the risk. The gift of life is worth giving despite *all* the risks involved. God knew that we would all go our own way, therefore the overwhelming joy and glory available to those who choose to listen to Him must, in the long-run, be so magnificent that it is worth all the pain and heartache suffered in giving us that opportunity.
- God did in fact take responsibility not just for the suffering - but also for our sin that originally took us away from Him and exposed us to it. His Son Jesus took all of our wrongdoing on Himself when He died on the cross, paying for it fully (so that justice could be satisfied and forgiveness offered). He then gave His Holy Spirit to all who turn to Him, changing them so they can live in His way - as healers not destroyers.

So, the sense of pain and injustice we feel in the face of suffering is a powerful clue that God exists as the all-powerful, all-good Creator.

The fact that suffering exists is a strong indicator that mankind has typically lived far away from God’s paths; and that this was a ‘risk’ worth taking when God created mankind - because the preciousness of relationship with Him outweighs everything else.

The message of the gospel - that the Son of God became human and suffered with us, and for us, demonstrates that far from being sadistic or indifferent, God loves us and wants to restore us to relationship with Him.

The gift of God’s Holy Spirit to all who turn to Him deals with the problem of man’s inhumanity to man at its root (changing us so we can live rightly), and shows that God acts powerfully in the midst of suffering, to give love, joy, peace, patience and kindness to and through all who are willing.

So, perhaps surprisingly, the reality of suffering is a clue pointing towards God’s existence, and towards the truth of the good news of Jesus, not away from it.

## DAY SIXTEEN

### Clues from Evil

*If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice... What causes quarrels and fights among you?... You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel...*

(James 3:14-16, 4:2-3).

‘Evil and Suffering’ are often presented together as hindrances to belief in God. We have looked at suffering, and its roots in human wrongdoing. Yet there is another factor at work in the background, which both helps explain the presence of wrongdoing and suffering in the world, and also points as another clue to God’s existence. This element is supernatural evil.

Nowadays, belief in the devil, demons, or dark supernatural forces of evil can seem very outdated - even laughable. Indeed, throughout the centuries the devil has been blamed for much that is quite naturally explicable; and has been caricatured to the point of ridiculousness. Yet, it’s best to avoid dismissing the idea of supernatural evil purely out of prejudice, and instead, look at where the clues seem to point.

- If you are willing to acknowledge the possibility that God exists, then it would be rational to also acknowledge the possibility that other spiritual beings exist. Any belief in the supernatural whatsoever would need to allow for the possibility of evil entities as well as good ones.
- It’s difficult to explain some of the most appalling examples of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ purely by saying ‘Some people are very cruel.’ (e.g Nazi or Japanese Concentration camps; torture, rape and crucifixion of minorities in Syria by ISIS; the occasional shocking news item regarding what goes on behind closed doors in Britain; perhaps even some of your own experiences). The wickedness and evil of what is done sometimes seem to go beyond what can be explained merely by human cruelty. There is a sinister darkness to the matter which points to supernatural evil.

- If you are willing to acknowledge that Jesus' words and actions may have carried genuine weight; that He may have been speaking the truth, then it's important to understand that Jesus spoke often of Satan as a real being; and directly confronted demons that were oppressing and enslaving ordinary people.
- Jesus referred to Satan as 'the father of lies'. Expert at manipulation, cover-up and deception. Logically, his most effective deception would be to deny his own existence and so be free to work 'under cover'.

Jesus accepted the authority of the Bible (in His time this consisted only of the Old Testament). The Old Testament traces the origin of all wrongdoing and suffering back to Satan.

- The book of Ezekiel (chapter 28) tells us Satan was created by God as an angelic being of tremendous wisdom and beauty, and was originally named Lucifer ('Day Star'). To start with he was '*blameless*' in the way he lived. However, he became proud because of his beauty, and wanting to seek splendour for himself, he corrupted his wisdom.
- Isaiah (chapter 14) tells us that he said in his heart, "*I will ascend to heaven, above the stars of God... I will make myself like the Most High.*" Not content with his position, he chose selfish ambition. This corrupted him, and led to his downfall from heaven, at which point he was renamed Satan ('Enemy') (see Luke 10:18).
- Satan was successful in luring human beings onto his same path of pride. Thus both these Biblical chapters also refer to cruel human kings (the king of Tyre, and the king of Babylon) who displayed similar disregard for what is right in order to pursue their own selfish goals, causing untold suffering and misery for others in the process.

According to the Bible, the key principle at work in Satan, then later in those kings, and indeed in every human being who doesn't acknowledge and surrender to the authority of God, is that of pride. We want to be our own god; and we act accordingly. Pride, selfish ambition, disregard for what is right and for the genuine needs of others - these are all too common in our hearts and lives. The Bible traces this all to a refusal to listen to and obey God - these are the poisoned fruits that come from that tree of pride.

Stepping on someone else, to get my own way, to get to the 'top of the pile'. Or conversely, demeaning myself, saying my life is of no importance, and so stealing from those around me the opportunity to enjoy my friendship... There are many ways that pride can show itself. They are all ultimately destructive.

We've all experienced that struggle - that battle to do the right thing when wrong seems so strangely attractive. Some have experienced the impact of spiritual evil in ways that they cannot deny. Others feel powerfully and unnaturally trapped by something more than their own wishes and wants.

Thus the Bible's assessment of the problem of evil ties in with our personal experiences. Its solution is intensely relevant, practical and powerful. Again, the message of the gospel is that through the cross of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can be changed, and thus Satan can lose his hold over us. Countless people can testify to their experience in this area. Jesus Christ has indeed overcome and defeated the powers of darkness. When we choose to say 'Yes' to God through Jesus, His victory becomes ours.

## **DAY SEVENTEEN**

### **Clues from Freewill**

*God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created them, male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)*

*"It's her fault, not mine!"* What a familiar phrase to anyone who's brought up small children or taught in a classroom. Wrong gets done - and we've got to pin the blame somewhere. Someone has to be held responsible - because someone is responsible. We're not just robots, forced to follow our feelings. We have free choice.

When the Bible states we are 'made in God's image' it doesn't mean physically - God does not have hands, eyes, ears and so on. It's saying that that our soul is modelled on God. He thinks -we think. He feels - we feel. He makes free choices - we make free choices.

Jesus re-affirmed the reality of human free will when He said, *No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father* (John 10:17-18). In other words, nothing 'made' the man Jesus give Himself up to be crucified. God gave Him free will - and Jesus made a free choice to give His life for us.

If God does not exist, then free-will cannot exist either. If we are nothing more than atoms in motion, then the moral decisions we make are determined by our DNA and the chemical reactions and interactions within our brain, in response to external or internal stimuli. We think we're making choices - but really we couldn't choose any differently. Free-will is an illusion, since there's always something conditioning our 'choices'. If this is true, how then can anyone be truly held responsible for what they do? They can't. Really, there would be no point criticising anyone for doing wrong - or praising anyone for doing right, other than to help condition their future behaviour.

Yet we know that blame for wrongdoing, and praise for right-doing, are not only valuable in helping ensure ongoing good behaviour, but they are valuable in themselves, because every person *is* in fact responsible for their moral choices, and could choose differently - should they choose to do so.

Our hurt or upset reactions when someone mistreats us only make sense if we believe that the person didn't *have* to act like that. Our gratitude and sense of being truly cared for when someone is kind to us only makes sense if that person *chose* to act that way, and wasn't just conditioned to do so.

If free-will exists, it has to be a gift from God.<sup>20</sup> We know that we have free-will. Hence the reality of free-will is another clue towards God.

## **DAY EIGHTEEN**

### **Clues from Freewill #2**

Unlike animals, human beings are able to make moral choices. A dog left alone in a room with a piece of steak will eat it - unless he has been trained not to (ideally through previous experiences of reward). Whether he eats it or not depends on his instincts, which in turn are shaped by what he feels will be most rewarding.

We humans also make moral choices based on what we feel will be most rewarding. But unlike animals, we can *consciously* weigh the claims and counter-claims of the rewards offered, and decide which path to take based on which reward we most want, and which demand we must fulfil in order to receive it - including when the reward is simply to do the right thing.

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<sup>20</sup> It has to be a gift from God because (a) if God did not create the Universe, we are the product of blind forces and all our decisions are conditioned by our biology. (b) If God did create the Universe, then He could have designed us not to have freewill. (c) So if we have freewill, that must be due to God's gracious decision to give it to us.

The problem is, in everyday life, making moral choices doesn't seem as clear-cut as that. At times we find ourselves doing wrongful things we really would rather not do. It seems that in practice, our will is not free - but that we are bound, or even enslaved, to certain ways of seeing things and doing things.

Every smoker who wants to quit, every drug user who wants to be free, every alcoholic who wishes they'd never started down that road, every pornography addict who longs for their mind to be put right about real relationships, every parent who finds themselves exploding with anger at a child's minor mistakes and then regretting it afterwards - everyone stuck in a pattern of undesirable behaviour understands that free choice isn't as free as it should be.

Jesus addressed this problem head-on. He said, *Whoever sins, is a slave to sin* (John 8:34). As human beings we have been given free will, but having taken our own path in life (sin), we find ourselves enslaved (by sin). We might try to break free - but we can't, because we're slaves. Something else is mastering us. We are *not* free to choose.

Jesus went on to say, *If the Son sets you free, you will be truly free* (John 8:36). We can't free ourselves. Yet Jesus, the Son of God, can really, truly set us free. This is why the message of the Gospel is not "*Clean your life up and then God will reward you.*" Instead, it is "*Say 'yes' to Jesus. He will set you free to truly live!*"

This corresponds to our experience of reality - we have free-will, and yet our wills are not really free. We need help; we need a Saviour. This clue points us not only towards God's existence (since we have freewill) but also towards the truth of the good news of Jesus (our will has become enslaved, but He can set us free).

## DAY NINETEEN

### Clues from Freewill #3

*See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... Therefore choose life, that you and your children may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, and holding fast to Him, for He is your life. (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20)*

As we've seen, human beings have the capacity to weigh up the demands and rewards of a certain course of behaviour, and choose accordingly whether to go down that path or not.

God's invitation to experience life as it was designed to be lived, hinges on His invitation to love, obey, and hold fast to Him. It's hard to imagine that anyone wouldn't want the *reward* of a satisfying, fulfilled life. But the idea (or *demand*) of loving and obeying God Himself isn't so appealing to many. A choice has to be made; and really all of our moral choices in life boil down to this one: Will we say 'yes' or 'no' to Jesus?

This is why the prophet Moses strongly urged his people to '*choose life*'. He was presenting a genuine moral choice to them. He also told them, *This commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off* (Deuteronomy 30:11). In other words, we can make the choice, because God has ensured that we can. It's not complicated or out of reach.

God chose to create the world. He didn't have to or need to. His will is free; only constrained by His own nature. Once He had created the world and mankind, He was (and is) still bound to act according to His own nature. For example, in all His dealings with us, He cannot be unjust, He cannot be untruthful, He cannot be cruel.

As human beings made 'in His image', we also have free will; we are only constrained by our own nature. We need love; we need God. We can't escape from that reality - it's part of our nature. We are free, however, to receive Him or reject Him, because we're not designed as automatons, but as people capable of love.

Thus, God brings each one of us to points in our life where we can freely choose to say 'yes' to Him, or to say 'no'. He doesn't force us; He doesn't make those choices for us. He simply sets before us life and good, death and evil, commands us to choose, and ensures that we are free to make that choice.

## DAY TWENTY

### Clues from Exclusivity

*Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.  
No-one comes to God the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)*

*Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10)*

The Christian faith is unique. All other religions and moral codes call on you to try to change in order to please God, or to make yourself a better person. You must, as it were, build a ladder to heaven.

The message of the Christian Gospel is the opposite. You don't try to climb up to God - *God comes to you*, through Jesus. God offers to change you by His own power, by giving you the gift of His Son Jesus, who died and rose again for you, and the gift of His Holy Spirit to come and live in you for ever. This is eternal life - God Himself given to you; God and you in permanent, personal, powerful relationship.

Rather than us offering something *to God*, God offers something *to us*. He does so because He *loves* us.

If we are honest, we know this is what we need. We know we need His love, and we know by our own efforts there's no way we could become the kind of people we should be, no matter how hard we try. We know we already have a life - but we know there is more; we long for *abundant* life - life in all its fullness.

This is why Jesus is the only way to God. Only in Jesus has God given *Himself* as a gift to mankind, meeting our every need, and assuring our eternal future, not based on how good we can manage to be, but through the free gift of eternal life.<sup>21</sup>

This is the final clue to God's existence, and to the truth of the good news of Jesus: *our deepest need can only be met by God Himself* - and He meets it in Jesus - if we say 'Yes'.

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<sup>21</sup> Eternal life - not as disembodied spirits or souls, floating around for ever. But as complete human beings -body, soul and spirit - resurrected to new life, just as Jesus rose from the dead.



## THANK YOU

Thank you for taking part in this journey to seek truth. Jesus does not just show the Way - He is the Way. He does not just point to Truth - He is the Truth. He does not just give us a better life - He is the Life. Full, bright, overflowing Life.

Above all, He is God's love, given to us. More than anything else, as human beings we long to love and to be loved. In Jesus, God's love is yours.

We hope and pray that this booklet has helped you. Please do get in touch with us with any questions or comments. We leave you with the simplest, most profound, most marvellous invitation you will ever receive. It is God's invitation to you - '*choose Life!*'. That Life is found in Jesus Christ - and only in Jesus Christ. Do put your trust in Him today, and ask Him for the gift of His Holy Spirit.

*God loved the world and all the people in it so much, that he gave His unique Son, Jesus Christ, so that whoever puts their trust in Him will not fade away, but will have the gift of eternal life. (John 3:16)*

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## MORE RESOURCES

### Internet

[www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org) (See also *YouTube*: "Reasonable Faith Animated Videos")  
Meticulously well-researched material on philosophy, science, comparative religion, and Christianity

[www.rzim.org](http://www.rzim.org)

### Books

**Can Man Live Without God?** Ravi Zacharias

**On Guard for students: A thinker's guide to the Christian Faith** William Lane Craig

**The Evidence for Jesus** R.T France

**Why Suffering?** (*Finding meaning and comfort when life doesn't make sense*) Ravi Zacharias

**Unspeakable - Facing up to the challenge of evil** Os Guinness

**Jesus among secular gods** Ravi Zacharias

(*Atheism, Scientism, Pluralism, Humanism, Relativism, Hedonism*)

**Jesus among other gods** Ravi Zacharias

(*Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity*)

[www.wellministries.co.uk](http://www.wellministries.co.uk)



Maybe you believe in God.  
Maybe you don't.  
Maybe you're just not sure.

Does it matter?

Is there any way of finding out?

Any way of being sure?

If you're not content to just get by and  
hope for the best...

If you're willing to take a good look  
at some of the available clues...

Then this booklet is for you.



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