



Let Us Reason Together

5 Questions for THINKING our way to God

"Come, let us reason together, says the Lord:" Isaiah 1:18a

Introduction

Every parent knows that from the moment a child is born they begin learning - through observation and experience - from the world around them. There is however, a particular stage of growth where curiosity seems to kick into overdrive. Around 3 or 4 years of age children will begin peppering their parents with one question after another about everything from “Why is the sky blue?” to “How do you know ice cream is cold?”. And though these questions are often redundant, at times hilarious and seem never-ending, they mark the beginning of personal investigation for what is real and true. Questions lead us to answers.

This is why God is not scared of or annoyed by our questions. On the contrary, He encourages them:

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.” Matthew 7:7 (NLT)

“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5 (NLT)

The purpose of this short booklet is to ask some important, life-changing questions, investigate and analyze the data available and go where the evidence leads. Thanks for joining me on this journey for what is real and true.

The humble and curious never stop learning.

“As a human being, one has been endowed with just enough intelligence to be able to see clearly how utterly inadequate that intelligence is when confronted with what exists...The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.” - Albert Einstein

Question 1: WHY DO WE NEED GOD?

Students all over the world today are taught that there is no God. I want to talk with you and ask you to think with me about what it TRULY and HONESTLY means for us as individual human beings and society as a whole IF God does not exist.

First of all, did you notice I used the word "IF"? There's an important reason why. Before we even get into the how's and what's and why's of this issue, it is necessary to state from the beginning that no teacher or professor (no matter how smart, recognized and esteemed) can know with absolute certainty that God does not exist. A person would have to KNOW EVERYTHING to be able to say with 100% certainty that there is no God in existence, but no one knows everything. In fact, no human brain is capable of knowing EVERYTHING there is to know so the best GUESS any atheist can make is that MAYBE there is no God, which obviously means MAYBE there is.

Our first dilemma with the "no God" belief is the question of how we as humans (defined by atheists as highly evolved animals whose inexplicable existence possesses NO absolute meaning or value beyond the here and now) determine right from wrong - good from evil - truth from falsehood? A person who does not believe in God will say (as he or she must) that there is no absolute truth therefore it is up to us as individuals and even more importantly, as a collective group or society to determine these things. But can't you already begin to see the danger here? What if an individual's idea of right and wrong goes against the majority's view and then that idea (like a seed planted in fertile soil) begins to germinate and grow in the minds of others until a larger and larger group of individuals all begin to agree on this new and opposing idea AND then this group becomes more and more influential and they are able to change more and more minds to think like them? This is an example of relativism, which is the belief that there's no absolute truth, only the truths that a particular individual, group or culture happen to believe in at a given time. In relativism, everyone is entitled to their own beliefs about what's moral and immoral.

Changing beliefs are good you might say, just look at slavery, which was once considered morally acceptable. Isn't it good that slavery is now viewed as morally wrong? Well, of course it is good when bad ideas change, but remember, in relativism there really is no such thing as a good or bad idea...it's more about what's popular. Sure, slavery is viewed as wrong NOW, but that could change. One day another generation could view slavery as perfectly acceptable again. Such is the ebb and flow of relativism.

Changing views of right and wrong is exactly what has happened in the US (and other countries) with issues like homosexuality and now gender identity. Homosexuality has been considered abnormal, dangerous and wrong in almost all societies from the beginning of time and not just because of its threat to the social structure of marriage and family, but on the simple grounds of natural science and biological design. The male and female anatomy are clearly meant to fit and function together for the purpose

of procreation. Universal and exclusive homosexuality would mean one thing for the human race: extinction. And yet today a minority of voices have come to control virtually all discussion on the topic of whether homosexuality is right or wrong. They demand that it is RIGHT and the majority (who still believe it is wrong) have given in to their demands and so it's no surprise that the minority is growing. Now we have a similar group demanding the same acceptance and support for people (even children) who want to change their natural and biological sex...otherwise known as transgenderism. In fact, these people demand that sex be seen not as an absolute based on DNA and anatomy, but as a fluid and changeable classification based on how an individual thinks or feels. In light of these developments, it's no wonder an American white caucasian woman recently claimed to be transracial and African American, an American caucasian male claimed to be a transethnic Philippino and a growing group of Europeans are claiming to be animals which I guess is called transmammal? All of these people base their claims on how they FEEL!!! It doesn't matter their true anatomy, race, ethnicity or even that they are definitely HUMAN, all that matters to them is how they feel and they want everyone else to agree with them instead of with reality. They demand we agree that the emperor is wearing new clothes!!!

On the horizon are sure to be changes in acceptance and laws about polygamy (having more than one spouse), pedophilia (sex between adults and adolescents) and maybe one day even incest (sex within immediate families) and bestiality (sex between people and animals). You may think I'm exaggerating here, but again, all it takes is a slowly building shift in acceptance usually brought on by the slowly building influence of like-minded individuals who will first promote their lifestyle as acceptable and then label anyone who speaks out against them as intolerant and hateful.

There is a group in the United States called NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association) which promotes the legal right for men to engage in sexual relationships with boys. This group is still considered a fringe group, but for how long? This group's beliefs may be wrong in YOUR mind, but their beliefs are not wrong in THEIR minds. Good thing there are laws against this, you say, but laws can change. What happens when NAMBLA members (or people secretly sympathetic to their cause) are elected to positions of government and change the laws in their favor? Laws are no safeguard against relativism. Just look at what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany. Hitler believed the Jews needed to be eradicated. Many disagreed with him, but many were sympathetic to his ideology and many more would be swayed to join him. In the end, Hitler changed his own country's laws to suit his beliefs and his plans. What's so disturbing about relativism is not that it leads to genocide, but that in an atheistic worldview - without any higher authority than man - no one can truly call genocide evil because good and evil are just opinions, not facts. We're all just animals with our own opinions. Survival of the fittest rules the day.

Understand this, without God there is no absolute truth and no higher authority to hold mankind's selfish, perverted and violent depravity in check.

Western civilizations, which since the days of Constantine have been in large part based on the values of Judeo-Christianity, are now just empty shells of the Biblical morality that once defined them.

“The Bible and Christian theology strongly influenced Western philosophers and political activists. The teachings of Jesus, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, are among the important sources for modern notions of Human Rights and the welfare measures commonly provided by governments in the West. Long held Christian teachings on sexuality and marriage and family life have also been both influential and (in recent times) controversial. Christianity played a role in ending practices such as human sacrifice, slavery, infanticide and polygamy. Christianity in general affected the status of women by condemning marital infidelity, divorce, incest, polygamy, birth control, infanticide (female infants were more likely to be killed), and abortion.”
(Wikipedia: Role of Christianity in civilization)

For many in the West, the world today no longer looks like it did even three to four decades ago. Atheism, humanism, and relativism have caused seismic shifts in the beliefs, and ultimately the behaviors of one continent, country and culture after the other. Asia, Africa and even the Middle East - which have long been considered traditional, conservative societies, especially when it comes to morality and public standards of behavior - will be the next to experience these seismic shifts as more and more western beliefs and behaviors are exported around the world through television, music, movies and other forms of media. Many in the East might find it incredulous that the UNITED NATIONS (the world's largest intergovernmental lobbying entity) now mandates teaching children in KINDERGARTEN about homosexual marriage and that it's okay to be a boy who dresses, acts and eventually undergoes surgery to become a girl. The goal of the UN is to help these beliefs and practices - packaged in atheism, humanism and relativism - spread around the whole world. In fact, in the years ahead, in more countries around the world, those who speak out against such beliefs and practices will be labeled as intolerant, hateful, narrow-minded and eventually arrested as is already happening in Britain where a woman called a transgendered man by his real name instead of his new feminine name and was taken to jail! (dailymail.com.uk - Monday, February 18th 2019) Similarly shocking, in Scotland, an 18-year-old male who identifies as a woman was given a slap on the wrist by authorities after assaulting a 10-year-old girl in the restroom. (thecourier.com.uk - Monday, February 18th 2019)

Online comments hit the nail right on the head:

*If it was 2015, I would laugh and call you crazy.
It's 2019, and I'm not laughing. I'm biting my finger nails.
What on earth is this cancer that has grown in western countries?*

*It's all about me, me, me and I don't give a damn about you.
That's what this cancer is. The Bible calls it sin.*

God's existence presents us with a standard, a fixed point of truth and authority by which mankind's beliefs and practices can be measured and held accountable. Without this standard, mankind will be lost much as the pilot of a car, plane or ship will soon be lost without a map, compass or the north star to guide him. A careful builder who wants his structure to last will use a cornerstone and a plumb line to guide his work. Without these foundational practices and standards, the structure will fall. Without God's truth as our foundation, we crumble and fall as well.

In the book of Leviticus, God lays down very clear and absolute laws regarding the sexual practices mentioned earlier:

Regarding INCEST, God says in Leviticus 18:6 (NLT): "You must never have sexual relations with a close relative, for I am the LORD."

Regarding HOMOSEXUALITY: "No man is to have sexual relations with another man; God hates that." Leviticus 18:22 (CEV)

And finally, regarding BESTIALITY God says: "A man must not defile himself by having sex with an animal. And a woman must not offer herself to a male animal to have intercourse with it. This is a perverse act." Leviticus 18:23 (NLT)

These commands from God have guided mankind and societies (of all ethnicities, both religious and non-religious) for a millennia, but now, more and more of God's standards are being discarded and replaced with new ideas of what is right and wrong.

Atheists claim we don't need God to have such standards, but again, we're not talking about changing opinions, but permanently fixed standards of truth. There is no way atheism can hold onto anything permanent and absolute because if there is no God then no one person or group (no matter how large, influential and powerful) has the right or authority to tell or make anyone else do anything other than what they want and desire to do and this is true no matter how destructive or perverted things get because remember, in relativism, nothing can truly be labeled destructive or perverted! It is **irrefutable** that from the beginning of time and throughout the history of the world, men and women have continuously done horrible things to one another and society at large. Human beings have always been just as capable of and prone to hating as they are of loving - destroying as they are at building - killing as they are at saving - abusing as they are at protecting. After all the wars and devastation that our planet has seen and experienced at the hands of men and women how can we possibly put our ultimate trust in mankind to determine right from wrong?!

One final point of hilarity, hubris and hypocrisy...Atheists will say there is NO absolute truth and expect you to BELIEVE what they just said even though according to them it cannot literally be TRUE! :) Anyone else see any flaws in this kind of logic?!

Now let's look at the other side of this coin.

What does it TRULY and HONESTLY mean for us as individual human beings and as a society IF THERE IS A GOD? First of all - and don't miss this - it means that to God we were worth creating! There is a reason why He made us SO WE EXIST FOR A REASON! We can be completely sure that our life has MEANING AND PURPOSE. We may not know what our meaning and purpose is, but if GOD made us then HE KNOWS. Do you think Henry Ford created the first automobile and then sat around with all his designers and engineers and mechanics and tried to figure out what the crazy thing was made for?! Of course not, they knew even before they drew the first sketch, and definitely by the time they bolted on the last tire, that the car was for transportation! God knows exactly what we were created for so if we're not sure about our purpose then we should go to Him for the answer. In addition, if God exists and if He made us for a reason then we are VALUABLE to Him. HUMAN LIFE IS VALUABLE! Each and every person born - no matter their status in life - no matter their background - their education or lack of - their wealth or poverty - and especially regardless of their physical appearance - EVERY PERSON IS VALUABLE AND IMPORTANT! What does this mean for us? EVERYTHING!!!! This means that we don't need to worry about what other people think or say about us because we know that we are valuable to God!!! Someone might tell me I'm not smart enough or beautiful enough or talented enough or rich enough, but I simply do not have to listen to or believe them because God made me uniquely me and there is not another me on the planet! I'm the only ME and God personally knows me because He personally made me. WOW! There's no reason for us to compare ourselves with others any longer AND there's no excuse for treating others as if they are not important. Because there is a God and because He made us, Jesus Christ could boldly and truthfully say that the TWO most important things for every person to do are to love God with all your heart and mind and strength and secondly, to love your neighbor (all the people around you, all the people in the world) as yourself.

A society based on the fundamental beliefs of the Judeo-Christian God should and must treat each person as a God designed, spirit-filled creature with value far beyond the here and now. And "tolerance" can only govern so long as it does not defame, belittle, harm, or destroy God's authority, God's design and God's creation. There is absolute truth. There is right and wrong, but it's not up to us to determine...it's bigger than us. In a God honoring society, our laws come from God. He determines everything for us and we follow Him as best we can. We're not perfect and we know it, but God is and we never doubt it.

I have to come back and share two more examples for the atheist leaning student. I am not an intellectual and science and physics are not subjects that I can easily wrap my mind around. However, I am a student of logic and coming to a decision based on logical deductive reasoning. For example, for all of my 44 years on earth, any and every experience I have ever had with something exploding - resulting in a BIG BANG - has reinforced the understanding in my mind that such events always cause

destruction. Whether this be an old stadium being imploded, a missile striking a tank, a stick of dynamite clearing a mountain, a grenade blowing up a bunker, airplanes striking the world trade center towers...even a small firecracker stuck in an ant hill. Any and every time something explodes it ALWAYS causes destruction and leaves behind a mess...disorder...EVERY...SINGLE...TIME. Evolutionists who believe in and teach a BIG BANG theory are literally telling students to believe that if a stick of dynamite were placed in the middle of a huge junk yard and lit, that after it exploded and the dust settled, we would discover - not a mess, not disorder - but an automobile totally assembled...and running...with a tank full of gasoline! If you think THAT'S impossible then I must actually go one step further and point out that in the Big Bang theory there wouldn't even be a junk yard to begin with...there was NOTHING. So nothing created a BIG BANG and then a BIG BANG did the opposite of what we know explosions do and instead of causing chaos, this explosion created a universe that functions according to natural laws and our planet teeming with intricate life. Say what?!

Speaking of our planet, have you ever stopped to think about how ours is the only planet in all the known galaxies that can support human life? Coincidence? We're all walking around - living and breathing - on a molten rock that is spinning on its axis at 1,000 miles per hour while also orbiting around the sun (a GIANT ball of FIRE!!!) through space at 67,000 miles per hour! Have you ever stopped to think about this! It's absolutely, positively mind boggling crazy! This spinning just so happens to create gravity which keeps us from floating away. It also works with the moon to keep our oceans at just the right tide. Our atmosphere just so happens to create oxygen for us to breath, filter light and produce rain so that plants can grow. But let's not stop here...if our planet is not complicated enough, let's look even smaller and closer at our own bodies that are perfectly formed and arranged for life on earth. To look inside the body at it's unfathomable design and usefulness leaves little room for chaotic chance. To ponder the intricate function of just a single human eyeball or the miraculous beating of a human heart leaves one speechless and awestruck. Irrefutable DESIGN seeps from ever pore and fiber. In all aspects and at all levels of our creative and industrious lives on earth we KNOW that any and every object that has a design from a simple chair to a complex rocket ship - everything that has a design MUST and INDEED DOES have a DESIGNER behind it. There is a mind behind every design. However, when it comes to our complicated universe and planet and especially our very bodies, suddenly the obvious and indisputable design is not the deliberate and caring act of a good Designer, but the evolutionary result of one Big Bang (*sigh*). What if the Big Bang didn't come from nothing as atheists propose, but was actually part of God's design? What if GOD initiated the Big Bang when He created the heavens and the earth? Every artist begins every drawing at one exact and specific fixed point on paper and from that one point everything else comes into creation. What if the Big Bang was God's initial starting point for creation and He completely controlled that explosion to cause everything in existence?

“The fool says, ‘There is no God.’” Psalm 14:1 (ESV)

Question 2: **WHAT IS GOD LIKE?**

Previously we talked about the question of whether or not God exists and what it means for us as human beings if He does or does not. From this point on we're going to continue to consider the possibilities and ramifications of a God who is the Author of everything. It's hard to know where to even begin pondering such a Being! How massive and intelligent and creative and powerful He must be! Surely all the languages in the world cannot truly and honestly describe God. The English language uses these three big words to TRY and describe Him: omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent.

OMNISCIENT means that God is all knowing. He knows everything because He is the Author of everything. He is the Source of...not a student of, like us...but the Source and Creator of ALL knowledge and understanding covering every topic and category known to man from science to medicine to physics to mathematics to technology and weather! While we still live in a universe full of mystery, God sits outside of all creation and holds everything He has made in His hands.

OMNIPRESENT means that God is everywhere, in all places. He is not bound by space and time and location. This is a hard concept to wrap our minds around, but basically because all things have their existence in and through God, He is present in and through all things. Let's take a tree for example. Is God in the tree? Yes. But only in the sense that God's existence holds all created things in existence, i.e. nothing can exist without Him. Also, as the maker of the tree, the tree displays the creative power and personality of its maker much as a work of art has the life of the artist within it. A person however would not literally speak to a work of art and expect a reply. In the same way, though God is in the tree, this does not mean that the tree IS God. The tree does not need to be prayed to or worshipped, but rather God should be worshipped all the more for creating the magnificent tree.

OMNIPOTENT means that God is all powerful. He is not lacking in anything. He is never weak or tired or hungry or injured or sick or lazy.

God's nature is to simply be Himself. The Bible says that God is the source of all life and all wisdom and all love. Love is not some romantic idea that man came up with. Love is from God. Love was God's idea and His creation. We may sing songs and write poems about love and act as if we own it, but the truth is that God first loved us and that is how we know what love is. God also describes Himself as perfectly JUST. This means He will always do the RIGHT and PERFECT THING according to His own nature and plans and wisdom and love - NOT ACCORDING TO OURS. This is very important for us as human beings to understand. We think we know what God should be like and what God should do, but that's like a tube of paint or a brush telling the artist how to paint. Remember the analogy about Henry Ford and the automobile he created? We might not like this thought, but it is true that if Henry Ford had decided to turn his automobile into a washing machine instead, that would have been perfectly within his right to do. And if Henry Ford had wanted to melt all the parts down into a

thin sheet of scrap metal he could have done that as well. He owned it. He made it. He could also destroy it. For us, all we have is life. All we know is life. So of course WE think that LIFE is the most important thing in all creation, but if God exists then the simple truth is that GOD is the most important thing in all creation and He can do with us as He pleases. It is a GOOD THING for us that God is loving and just.

Looking at God correctly and understanding Who He is and What He is like will silence a human being. It will make a man or woman feel very finite and small which is exactly what we are. The God of the Bible says that fearing Him is the beginning of wisdom. This fear is a very important and healthy kind of fear, the kind of fear that is full of respect and awe, wonder and curiosity, longing and humility. What an amazing statement that all wisdom...all knowledge...all true understanding...all correct thinking must begin with a healthy fear of God. Why? Because to begin with the fear of God is to begin seeing your life in the right perspective. Created. Valuable. Loved. God's design. Made for a reason. God is in control, not you. God has the first and last word on everything. The only healthy response is to seek Him. Listen to Him. Love Him. Follow and obey Him, knowing and trusting He will lead and guide and love and protect and teach and discipline and heal and bless and challenge and grow you into the person you are meant to be...for Him.

A person who doesn't believe in God will look at the story of creation in the Bible and say that it is too simple, but that's exactly the point! Creation was incredibly SIMPLE FOR GOD! Making something from absolutely nothing is impossible for human beings, but for God it is easy. The Bible says He just spoke and things came into existence. Just the Word from his mouth and there it was. "Let there be light!" AND THERE WAS LIGHT! "Let there be universes and galaxies and a sun, moon and stars." IT ALL CAME INTO EXISTENCE. Of course it was easy for God...HE'S GOD! This leads us to an additional point. Many cultures and peoples have and continue to believe in and worship numbers of gods whom they believe all exist together and at the same time. Logic should lead every person to the conclusion that TWO (and especially more) ALL knowing and ALL powerful gods cannot exist at the same time. For them to do so means they COULD NOT BE ALL KNOWING OR ALL POWERFUL SINCE THEY WOULD BE SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND POWER WITH THE OTHER. Understand? So the more gods you have the less knowledge and power each one can claim for him or herself. So these gods must be limited in knowledge and power which means they are smaller than something else which means they must have come from somewhere or something. This also means they cannot be perfect and if they cannot be perfect then they must have weaknesses and faults...they're not sounding much like gods anymore, are they? In fact, they're beginning to sound a lot like us. The ONE TRUE GOD says that HE DOES NOT SHARE HIS GLORY WITH ANYONE OR ANYTHING IN ALL CREATION. HE ALONE IS GOD. THIS IS A GOD WORTHY OF BELIEVING AND TRUSTING IN. THIS IS A GOD WHO DOESN'T NEED US, BUT WE NEED HIM.

Question 3: *WHY ALL THE MYSTERY?*

Now to our next topic and question; one that I think about and consider often. If God is real and so big and glorious and overwhelming, how can He possibly stay unseen? And why does He hide from us? In looking at these two questions, we need to admit that the HOW is not nearly as important as the WHY. The simple HOW answer is that God is Spirit and capable of doing whatever He chooses to do. So how He hides His presence and glory from us is not really relevant. What IS worthy of our consideration and attention is the why behind His ways. WHY would God hide and limit Himself? If He could fill every ounce of existing space and matter with His glorious and blinding presence, why not do it right now and get the universal worship from His creation that He deserves?

This brings us to an extremely important aspect of our existence and creation. The Bible says that when God created male and female, he placed them in a marvelous and wonderful garden where all of their needs and wants were met. Not only did they have one another for companionship, but most important of all, they had fellowship with God Himself in an intimate way. God spoke to them directly and the Bible even describes God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8).

Then God did something that would forever change the course of mankind, he gave them a simple command and the choice to obey or not to obey. He also warned the man and woman that if they disobeyed His command they would die. All through my years of believing in God, I come back again and again to this moment in the garden. Why the choice? Why the opportunity to choose life or death? Why the test? I believe the real clear answer to these questions was given thousands of years later when Jesus Christ walked the earth. Jesus said that "whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. And if anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching." It's a matter of love. LOVE.

God must be chosen. He must be sought after and wanted. He will not FORCE any to bow down and worship...though He could...He will not. God knows that for any loving relationship to be true and genuine, both sides must CHOOSE the other. He chose to create us and then said..."Now you choose me." There would be no true joy and affection between us and God if we were unable to choose to love and seek after and worship Him. If we were programmed like robots to say "I love you" and if we were wired to "bow down and worship" at the push of His remote control, there never could or would be any true love and worship between the Creator and His creation.

Now let's get back to the question of why the mystery? Imagine what God could do to keep us in line and make sure we believe in and obey Him. One night I got carried away with thinking about this! I imagined every time I just thought something evil or bad that a lightning bolt from the sky came down and zapped me to my senses. Or what if every time someone took the Lord's name in vain their tongue turned green and swelled up or any time someone lied their nose really did grow extra long like Pinocchio or every time a guy lusted their skin turned a bright purple color...I mean

would any of this really be hard for God to do? He created the universe and He could easily use shame tactics to keep us in line, but He doesn't. He simply won't coerce us to love and obey Him. And what about God just showing up in the sky in blinding glorious light with a million angels singing His praise – a display so overwhelming that all we can do is hit the ground in fear and trembling – our affections and obedience manipulated with shock and awe tactics?

Philip Yancey, in his book “The Invisible God”, compares God’s invisible and mysterious presence to a father playing hide and go seek with his child. The child WANTS the father to hide so he or she can go look for him and the father WANTS to be found so they can delight in the game so even though the father hides behind the door, he purposely leaves his foot sticking out for discovery. The father, as a whole, can't be seen, but the FOOT is clear and obvious if one is truly looking.

In the same way, the Bible says that God's creative characteristics are CLEARLY seen by what He has created and that mankind is without excuse when it comes to believing in God because the universe displays His design, His goodness and His undeniable presence. Again, it all went wrong the moment Adam and Eve sinned and their relationship with God was broken and they were left to their own devices and to the knowledge of good and evil that they had suddenly gained. Their new “freedom” from God only led them (us) further and further away from the truth and their faculties became corrupted and their understanding warped and soon they began to worship created things instead of the Creator...becoming the center of their own worship. We don't see God because we are only focused on ourselves.

It's very important to conclude this essay with a crucial statement from God's word: the Bible says that one day the heavens will be opened before the eyes of man and every human being who has ever lived will see God for Who He truly is. At that time the Bible describes every man and woman, boy and girl down on bended knees confessing with their mouths the truth of God's existence. God is patiently waiting for the number of those who are going to choose to believe in and love and obey and follow Him - for this number to reach its culmination - He alone knows this number - and when it has been reached, God will then take his foot that is sticking out from the door and kick the door down! His justice and glory demand that He is ultimately known by ALL for Who He truly is. God cannot and will not be mocked. All those who spent their lives mocking Him with unbelief, WILL find themselves face to face with their Maker.

“For the Scripture says, ‘As surely as I am the living God, says the Lord, everyone will kneel before me, and everyone will confess that I am God.’” Romans 14:11 (GNT)

Question 4: *WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT JESUS?*

You want to talk about an amazingly gracious, patient and loving God...think about this. FOR NOW - FOR A TIME - God is willing put up with millions of people mocking and offending Him for the sake of just one more person choosing to love and obey Him.

Both groups of people - those who believe and love God and those who do not - both groups walk around in the same universal grace of God. What does this mean?

This means that even though you do not believe in God or obey Him or give Him any glory or credit for your life - and even though this is offensive to Him and mocks Him and leads other people to dismiss and mock Him as well - even though you do this every second of your existence - God still allows you to live and breathe and enjoy blue skies and sunsets, good food and drink, music and dancing and laughter, sex and more sex. God's universal grace is extended to everyone for a time, but when a man's days on this earth are over...this universal grace ends with it.

“Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God.” Hebrews 9:27 (GNT)

There is an additional grace necessary (and available) for every man and woman to spend eternity with God. This is the Atoning Grace of God - extended freely to those - and only those - who choose to believe in, to trust and to obey the One true God and His son Jesus Christ. Now what's the big deal about Jesus Christ you might say?

“For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

The big deal is that He – and He alone – did the most unthinkable, unimaginable thing for all mankind. He took upon himself the FULL WRATH of His Father's Holy and Righteous judgment against sin...ALL THE SIN OF THE WORLD. There is simply no possible way for any human being to ever fully comprehend what Jesus did on the cross when He ALLOWED sinful men (men He had created) to nail Him and crucify him on a cross like a condemned convict, though He was totally and completely innocent. Imagine every criminal who's ever been condemned and put to death for crimes committed from the beginning of time until now – all the stonings, hangings, guillotines, firing squads, electrocutions, lethal injections, etc. – now imagine if ONE PERSON received ALL OF THIS punishment on his one body. Millions of stonings, hangings, beheadings, firing squads, electrocutions, lethal injections. Physically speaking this is impossible, but spiritually speaking this is exactly what the Son of God came to earth to do. On the cross, Jesus received onto himself God's punishment for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD, including yours and mine.

It's ironic (and pathetic) that so many people view Jesus as this meek, mild mannered, soft spoken, weak and helpless victim. The truth is, there has never been, nor ever will be a more heroic and bold figure in all of literature, cinema or reality than Jesus Christ. The rescue mission he designed and completed is incomparable in its scope of sacrifice, treachery, horror, victory, and love...

SACRIFICE – Jesus willingly gave up His rightful place and authority in heaven to take on the frailty and limitations of humanity. That was a very simple statement that deserves hours upon hours of contemplation. A pathetic comparison would be this: The son of the President of the United States gives up his room at the White House to go and live in the dark, putrid and rat infested sewers under the streets of New York City. (A slightly more accurate comparison would be if the President's son willingly became one of the rats...and let the other rats kill him so that he could save some rats).

TREACHERY – Jesus was slandered by the religious, abandoned and betrayed by His closest friends, mocked and ridiculed by the ignorant and yet remained completely sinless in his actions, feelings and thoughts! Do you want to witness the clearest and saddest example of human fickleness and backstabbing behavior? Read the gospels and see how the crowds who once clamored around Jesus for healing, miraculous signs or free food suddenly turned on him with insults and hatred when he appeared to be useless, weak and no longer a commodity. To be betrayed with a kiss by a close friend – not an enemy – is there anything more tragic and pitiful than that?

HORROR – Jesus was whipped until the skin on his back was lacerated and open to the bone, a crown of thorns was jammed down onto his skull, and large nails were driven through his wrists and ankles pinning him onto a wooden cross. As far as torture, brutality and pain goes...Jesus' suffering was horrific.

VICTORY – With his last breath on the cross, Jesus declared it is finished and then carried all the sins of the world down into the grave where He buried them for all eternity. Three days later He rose from the dead, completely destroying forever the power of spiritual death over sinful man. He rescued the whole world from its prison and shackles of sin.

LOVE – Through Jesus' death in OUR place – complete forgiveness for sins is available TO EVERY HUMAN BEING who repents of his or her sins and believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Through Jesus' resurrection, those who repent and believe are made new and alive in the Spirit of God – with the love of God poured out into their hearts – the peace of God poured out into their minds – the joy of God poured out into their souls – the power of God poured out into their lives!

Let no one dare think for one second that Jesus was a weak and helpless victim of His time. If you can come up with ANYTHING tougher than holding back your own limitless and justifiable power to destroy those you created (with just a word) as they destroy you...please let me hear it. **Jesus is the HERO of ALL creation for ALL TIME!**

Question 5: *WHAT MUST I DO?*

I hesitate to even begin with such a question because as humans, we tend to think that just about anything is attainable by effort. If I just work harder or do more or do better then I will get the results I desire. In many areas of life this may be true, but in the area of spiritual regeneration – being “born again” as Jesus describes it – our efforts are completely and utterly useless...at first!

Let me explain. When Jesus told a religious leader named Nicodemus that “Unless a person is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” Nicodemus responded with something along the lines of, “How can I be born again when it’s impossible for me to return to my mother’s womb?!” And he’s right, that would be difficult!

Jesus was referring to a spiritual rebirth that occurs in the spiritual realm (meaning we don’t see it with our eyes, can’t measure it with any machinery or tool, or capture it for analysis and study). Because this rebirth takes place spiritually, it is completely God’s work. To go one step further into the mystery of God’s sovereignty, the Bible states that even our desire to be spiritually reborn must come from God in the first place.

Now you can stomp your feet here and say “well, that’s not fair” and put a stubborn roadblock up in your heart, but just know that’s exactly what got you into this situation in the first place - your sinful PRIDE!

Or you can HUMBLE yourself before God and allow your CONSCIENCE to be stirred by the story of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. Allow your HEART to grieve over your sinful condition. Allow your MIND to believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and your only hope for salvation. Allow ALL OF YOURSELF (Heart, mind and soul) to RESPOND to God’s call of repentance, obedience and allegiance.

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 (NLT)

Saved means forgiven of all your sins (past, present AND future). Saved means your relationship with God has been restored. You are His child and He is pleased with you. Saved means you are no longer spiritually dead, but spiritually alive. God’s Spirit lives inside you and will always be with you to help you by providing spiritual strength, wisdom, faith and gifts for the advancement of God’s kingdom and the edification of others. Saved means you are heaven bound and your name is written in the Book of Life. You will no longer be judged for punishment according to your sins, but will be judged for reward according to your faithful works.

Here is where effort comes into play:

***“So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.”
James 2:17 (NLT)***

What James means is that true faith will SHOW itself true by the ACTIONS it produces. The actions don't save you, but they do confirm your faith is real. Jesus put it another way:

“A tree is known by it's fruit.” Matthew 12:33 (CSB)

If you are a true follower of Jesus then your faith and trust in Him WILL lead you to love and serve others with not just words, but with actions.

Finally, saved means that for the rest of your days on earth you will learn one lesson after another about how to trust and obey the God who made you and calls you daily to surrender your life to Him. Often this surrendering will involve you loving and serving those around you. Your friends and family, strangers, even your enemies. And as you practice trusting and obeying you will find yourself being led more and more by God's Holy Spirit living inside you. You will find yourself more and more focused on living for God than for yourself. You will notice the things of this earth losing their hold on you as you yearn more and more for the things of heaven. You will be changed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. You WILL still screw up and falter and doubt and struggle and fail and that's okay because JESUS WILL NEVER FAIL YOU.

“Then (Jesus) the King will say to those on his right, ‘My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created.’” Matthew 25:34 (CEV)

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is truly perplexing and tragic that people would place their FAITH in a meaningless existence rather than in a life full of purpose and hope.

If you truly do believe that there is NO God, then please PLEASE be honest enough to admit that any value you place on your life and on the lives of the people around you is only IMAGINARY. Without God all your hopes and dreams and values can only be IMAGINARY, because the truth of your existence is that you don't matter and don't have any value. Everything you choose to make important and beautiful and fulfilling is just pretend. I'm not trying to depress you, but it is VERY important that you are at least HONEST with yourself.

The Bible says that you are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by God. This means you are extremely valuable and important and not because of what you think or feel or what anyone else says, thinks or feels, but because God says you are. Allow that to sink in.

I'm also perplexed by any country or government which tries to force its citizens to believe that there is no God. These governments are usually suspicious of and violently against Christians. If you think about it, true Christians - people who believe in and obey the teachings of Jesus Christ - will love their neighbor, even love those who don't love them. They won't use violence against even the violent. They won't get drunk and act foolishly and cause harm to others. They won't become addicted to harmful substances. They won't cheat, steal or rob. They won't abuse family members or commit adultery and cause harm to the single most important institution of society - the family unit. They will try to always be honest and respect authority. Jesus himself told his followers to respect government officials and pray for them to lead with truth and dignity. Christians will feed the poor, look after orphans and widows, welcome the homeless and visit and encourage those in prison. DOES THIS SOUND LIKE A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ARE A THREAT TO SOCIETY? Aren't these the kinds of people you should WANT in your community?!

The problem with a Christian in the eyes of an atheistic government is that the Christian's final and ultimate allegiance is not to any manmade institution, but to God. If a Christian has to make a choice between obeying their government and obeying God's Word, he or she will choose God every time. In light of all we've looked at and talked about in this study, a person would be foolish not to choose God over everything and everyone else.

“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” 1 John 2:17 (NIV)