

## FAQ College Group Evangelism Slots

### **How to use this resource...**

The idea is that each week in your college group you take one question below and have a think about how you might go about answering it if a friend asked you. With some guidance this might be something you could delegate to a different member of your college group each week.

You might want to start each week by asking people in college group to get into pairs and have one minute to have a go at answering the question. Then ask people to share with the whole group some of the best points that you came up with. Also you might want to think about some of the following questions:

#### **1. Why would someone ask this question?**

*When answering questions we often need to realise that the question is being asked is not the real issue and often questions are asked for a variety of reasons. We need to be thinking what is the question behind the question? E.g. "Why does God allow suffering?", is this just being asked as a standard objection to the Christian faith? Or is it because they have recently been through a hard time?*

#### **2. What assumptions/universal standards does the question assume?**

*Objections always assume a standard by which the objection can be made. E.g. "Why does God allow suffering?" assumes that suffering is not how things ought to be, but why is that the case? It also assumes what God must and mustn't be like, but where have we got those ideas from?*

#### **3. How is the question an opportunity to explain something of the gospel?**

*E.g. "How can God command people in the Old Testament to do violent acts?" God using the Israelites to bring judgement on the Canaanites allows us to teach about the horrors of being under God's judgement and to warn about the coming judgement day (see notes below).*

#### **4. What questions could you ask in response to the question?**

*E.g. "Why are there so many denominations?", you could ask, "Why do you expect christianity to be any different?", "Is anyone not a hypocrite?" or "Why is it wrong to be a hypocrite?". These will get people thinking about the deeper issues and cut through smokescreen questions. They also expose the emptiness of false beliefs.*

#### **5. What Bible passages might be useful?**

*Bible passages are included in the notes below, it is often useful to come up with passages where Jesus handled this subject.*

#### **6. What other resources/books do you know that tackle this question in more depth?**

*You might want to check out the UCCF BeThinking website ([www.bethinking.org](http://www.bethinking.org)).*

Please don't try to cover all of those every week!!! Choose just one or two, and so give some variety. Below are some pointers to how you might go about answering the question, they are not intended to be definitive CICCUC answers!! If you come up with better answers then let me know.

resources: [www.uccf.org.uk](http://www.uccf.org.uk)  
contact: [jcarter@uccf.org.uk](mailto:jcarter@uccf.org.uk)

**uccf:thechristianunions**  
*making disciples of Jesus Christ in the student world*

### **How can Jesus be the only way to God?**

- Jesus said he was the only way (Jn. 14:6 cf. Ac. 4:12).
- In academic circles it has long been assumed that religions are man's evolving ideas about God - the Bible agrees! We need to put speculation to one side and hear the Living God speak which he has done in Jesus.
- It is very insensitive to say all religions are basically the same. The main religions sharply disagree on the nature of God, creation, man, sin, salvation, Jesus, judgement and life after death! They cannot all be right!
- Christianity is radically different to all other religions: **1.** It is the only religion that says you cannot be saved by what you do - heaven and forgiveness are a gift. **2.** Jesus is the only founder of a religion who is honest about humanity: our hearts are set against God, thus from our hearts come all kinds of evils. **3.** All other founders of religions are dead, Jesus is alive and reigning right now. **4.** Only in Christianity does God become one of us, thus revealing himself. **5.** Real, Biblical Christianity is not about rituals and traditions, but a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- All truth claims are exclusive by definition, since a truth claim denies its negative.
- "There is no such thing as absolute truth". Is that statement absolutely true!?! It is a self-denying claim.
- The reason why Jesus is the only way to God, is because he is the only cure for our terminal disease of 'sin'. With any disease, is it arrogant to claim there is only one cure, if there really is only one cure? Of course, claiming absolute truth is not an excuse for arrogance.
- The offer of forgiveness is for everyone, so is very **inclusive!**

### **How can a God of love send people to hell?**

- With great compassion Jesus warned people about hell (Jn. 5:28-29, Mk. 9:42-48). Why do you think he spoke about hell?
- Even though God is the loving creator and ruler of the world, we've told him to push off all of our lives by ignoring him (that is the heart of sin). If we persist in rejecting him, then eventually we must expect that he will reject us. God's rejection of us will be terrible - hell will not be a party.
- Like a good government, a good God takes justice seriously. What kind of God would let murderers and rapists walk free?
- The underlying issue is that we do not believe the Bible when it says we are bad. The question is not, 'How can God send good people to hell?' but 'How can a good God let evil people into heaven?'.

### **Do Christians have to attend church?**

- A person is not saved by regular church attendance, but as a gift from God received through faith (Eph. 2:8-10). But we are saved **to be** part of a new family (Mk. 3:34-35, 1 Pet. 2:9) and so church is God's family get together! The second greatest command is to love one another (Mk. 12:31) which cannot be kept unless we regularly meet with other Christians.
- Christians should expect to find it very hard to keep going with Jesus unless they belong to a local church, since God's plan is that by meeting together we encourage and teach each other to persevere and grow as Christians (Heb. 10:25).
- A lack of desire to belong to a church is often a sign of a deeper spiritual problem - false conversion or cherishing a particular sin. What is behind the reluctance to attend church?

### **Wasn't Jesus just a good teacher?**

- Jesus didn't give us that option. He made claims to be equal to the Father (e.g. John 5:18-23). If that

claim is false, was he lying or deluded? If lying, what were his motives? If deluded, how do you account for his teaching?

- No where does Jesus make an absolute claim “I am God worship me”, but we wouldn’t expect him to. Jesus is far more specific: he claims to be the eternal Son (e.g. John 3:16), the LORD of Israel (e.g. Mark 1:2-3; 2:19; 2:28; 12:35-37). Other useful verses are: Jn. 1:1-3, 5:18-23, 8:58, 20:28, Phil. 2:6; Col 1:19.
- In the Old Testament the Son appears as the Angel of the LORD (Gen. 16:7-14, 48:15-16, Ex. 3:1-6, Jdg. 13:1-25). The Angel of the LORD is also known as the LORD, as well as being sent by the LORD.

### **Won’t a good life get me into heaven?**

- No one is ‘good’ except God (Mk. 10:17-18, Rom. 3:23). Our culture has embraced humanism which believes man is essentially good, but this is hardly tenable after all the evils and wars of last century and in light of the news everyday. The Bible says from birth our hearts are corrupted (Gen. 9:21) - that’s why we do not need to teach children to misbehave!
- How good is good enough? Is the cutoff above or below you? God’s pass mark is perfection (Matt. 5:48, Jas. 2:10), since He cannot let anyone impure spoil heaven (Rev. 21:27). We like to compare ourselves to other people, but God’s standard is how we compare with Jesus. Jesus said that lust is equivalent to adultery and anger to murder (Matt. 5:21-28), i.e. God even knows our attitudes, thoughts and motives which are the source of wronging other people (Mk. 7:19-23). Such that even our good deeds are bad in God’s sight (Isa. 64:6).
- But the biggest problem is how we treat God and his Son. Sin is living for ourselves and ignoring our loving creator. The problem is we are rebels, whether or not we are ‘good’ rebels.
- The good news is that Jesus has lived a good life for us (Heb. 4:15) and on the cross has taken all our rebellion. So through Jesus, heaven is a totally free gift (Tit. 3:5) which we cannot earn or even contribute to by our moral performance.

### **Isn’t faith only psychological?**

- “Isn’t Christianity a crutch for the weak?” Yes, Christians are people who recognise their complete bankruptcy before the Living God and the need to totally depend on Jesus. But this is not a psychological crutch for those who can’t face reality. In fact, the reality of being a Christian is increased troubles and persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).
- Atheism and agnosticism are ‘crutches’ for those who do not want to accept God’s existence. Both attempt to hide the *plain* truth about God and judgement (Rom. 1:18-23).
- The basis of our faith is facts, not feelings.
- The question confuses two issues: how someone comes to hold a certain belief and whether or not it is true.
- “Aren’t Christians willing to endure hardships to reach a better future?” Yes, we follow Jesus in the pattern of suffering now, glory later (Mk. 8:34-38). This is not wrong, we do it all the time e.g. enduring exams to improve career prospects.
- “Don’t Christians believe in the Bible just because of social conditioning / upbringing?” But then don’t others reject Christianity due to conditioning / upbringing?! Many Christians do not come from Christian families and the opposite is also true: many people from Christian families reject Christ. Jesus calls **all** to follow him from any background or upbringing.

### **Hasn’t science disproved God?**

- The points of apparent conflict are actually few in number. For example, with regards to Archeology

the Bible has stood up under intense scrutiny and is increasingly vindicated.

- It is a popular assumption that the historical relationship between Christianity and science is essentially that of conflict. Recently, mainstream academics have been recognising that at best this is far too simplistic and at worst highly misleading. Conflict has arisen at times, but Christianity has also played a major role in driving scientific progress.
- All scientific disciplines are built upon a common foundation that includes e.g. the principle of induction (allowing us to discover and use the so called laws of nature). Yet, the Atheist on the one hand believes the universe is unguided, purely a product of “chance+time”, and on the other hand is committed to using the laws of nature! Is the universe random or highly ordered? So how can an Atheist be a Scientist?
- Technical discussions on Creation-Evolution are rarely productive. There are still big problems with Evolutionary theory on a macro scale and is arguably propped up more by being a convenient paradigm, than by direct evidence.
- The claim that “science is the only way of gaining knowledge” fails its own test since the claim cannot be proved by science!

### **How do you know that God exists?**

- The only way we can know whether God exists and what he is like is if he chooses to reveal himself to us. God did this by coming to earth as the man Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:1-18, Heb. 1:1-3, Matt. 11:27). So we need to look at the evidence for Jesus.
- The Bible also says deep down everyone knows God exists through creation (Rom. 1:20), but we’ve all rejected that truth.

### **Why does God allow suffering?**

The Bible doesn’t give glib answers to this issue and doesn’t pretend that answers will make suffering you may be going through any less painful. Thankfully, the Bible does not dodge the issue of suffering either, in fact it is a major theme:

In the **beginning** God, as the loving and generous ruler, makes the world ‘very good’ - free from suffering and pain. Mankind was made to relate to the Lord and to each other. But we chose to reject God and so have brought suffering on ourselves (by hurting each other) and God has brought suffering on us (i.e. judgement in a collective sense). Some suffering is a result of a specific sin, but most is not (Jn. 9:1-3).

The Bible **ends** with the original situation restored, but with no possibility of this new creation becoming corrupted again. One day Jesus will return and suffering brought to an end. People that presently refuse to submit to Jesus are banned from entering, otherwise they would spoil God’s new world.

God achieved this through the death of his Son. On the cross Jesus suffered on our behalf to end suffering. There is no greater way God could demonstrate how seriously he takes the problem of suffering. Not only has he suffered in the person of Jesus, but through the cross he has demonstrated that he is abounding in love and utterly committed to justice. This means we can trust the God of the Bible in suffering.

It may be that he allows suffering for greater goods even if we do not always know what they are. It is arrogant to claim that a good God could not exist because of suffering: “How can a mere finite human be sure that infinite wisdom would not tolerate certain short-range evils in order for more long-range good that we could not foresee?” These greater goods include God lovingly disciplining his children (Heb. 12:4-13) and using suffering as a wake-up call to the final judgement (Lk. 13:4-5).

- Note: The strict philosophical problem of suffering does not exist unless it can be proved that God

could never have morally sufficient reasons for allowing suffering to occur.

- Note: Evil is evidence for God! We object to suffering because we believe things are often not how they ought to be. But if there is no God, why is this 'ought' justified? Where is the universal standard by which we judge evil as evil?

### **What about those who have never heard?**

- Everyone has heard the gospel preached through creation (Rom. 10:17-18 cf. Ps. 19). But we all suppress the truth, finding excuses to deny the Living God (Rom. 1:18-20). This denial becomes so second-nature that we can forget we are doing it. Since we've rejected the message through creation, God has given Christians the job of telling the gospel. This is God's normal way of working in people (Rom. 10:14-15).
- We need to get our perspective right: none of us deserve salvation, that God acted to save some is purely out of his love. In fact, God has the right to choose who will be saved. This might offend our sensibilities, but it does not mean Christianity is any less true. The hard truth is all of us have been at war with our loving creator and so deserve hell.
- On the day of judgement, God will take into account how much exposure to the gospel we have had (Matt. 11:20-24).
- God promises that those who seek him will be found (Matt. 7:7). He wants to save and in cultures with less exposure to Christians there are many stories of his supernatural working.
- The cross shows that God is abounding in love and utterly committed to justice. Even if we do not know all the answers, we can trust these people to the God of the Bible - there will be no miscarriage of justice on judgement day (Gen. 18:25).
- So it comes full circle back to us: If we have heard we must believe; if we have believed we must tell others the gospel.

### **Is the Bible historically reliable?**

- The Bible was written by approximately 40 different authors, over 1500 years, in 3 different languages and in a wide geographical region. Yet it is one consistent story, with many interweaving themes but all climaxing in the life, death and resurrection of one man: Jesus Christ.
- Numerous prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus that were made 100s of years before he lived (e.g. Matt. 2:5-6).
- 5000+ Greek manuscripts alone used to construct the New Testament! Variations between them are minor and are openly recorded in footnotes of most modern Bibles.
- The gospel writers were eye-witnesses or interviewed them. They claimed to be accurate (Lk. 1:1-4, Jn 20:30-31).
- The gospels contain many historical details confirmed by Archeology and other writers (even hostile writers) of the time.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the 1940s, are about 1000 years older than the previously oldest Old Testament manuscripts, yet textual variations are slight.

### **How can the cross be just?**

- "Why can't God just forgive?" God can't just forgive because of who he is. God is both loving and just (in fact his justice flows out of his love for his creation). To just forgive would be to deny his justice and to imply that evil doesn't matter.
- "How can God punish a third innocent party?" Jesus is not a third party, instead we need to remember that Jesus is: 1. The offended party - he is the one we have sinned against. 2. The judge - the one appointed by the Father as the judge of the world. 3. Willing - before the creation of the

world all three members of the Trinity were involved in planning the cross. Jesus was willingly gave himself to this plan, knowing what it would involve.

- “How can someone take the punishment for someone else?” Normally this would not be right, but we are united to Jesus by the Spirit. This spiritual union is not just a legal construct, it is a *real* union so that we really are in him and he is in us. Jesus is the head and we are the body. As the head, Jesus bears the penalty the body deserves.

### **Didn't the church choose which books went into the Bible?**

- It is not so much that the church selected the canon, as the canon selected itself. In other words, the canon is not so much an authoritative list of books, but rather a list of authoritative books.
- Since the authority of books that really are from God is self-attesting, the best thing to do is read the NT yourself and then read these other books (translations are readily available on the internet).
- Most of the books in question are Gnostic works. Gnosticism was a 2<sup>nd</sup> century heresy and these books were clearly written then to promote this teaching. They typically claim to be secret sayings of Jesus (i.e. no one else heard Jesus say them!), have anti-feminine comments, dislike the incarnation, contain far less historical detail and often borrow from the real gospels.
- The Church Fathers identified three marks that a book with self-attesting authority should have: 1. Consistency - Does the teaching conform with the rest of the scriptures? 2. Apostolicity - Was it written by an apostle or someone with immediate connection with an apostle? 3. Acceptance - Did it have widespread acceptance and use by the church from the start?
- The purpose of the Council of Nicea was not to decide the canon, it wasn't even part of the discussion. On the contrary, there had been agreement about the basic core of the NT canon for many years before Nicea.

### **Doesn't the Bible have old fashioned ideas about sex?**

- God thinks sex is good, he invented it and gave it to us as a gift (a whole book of the Bible, “Song of Songs”, is devoted to celebrating sex!).
- But like all of God's gifts, it is to be enjoyed as God designed it work. When we try to use a gift outside of the framework God designed it work within it causes untold damage. God has designed sex to be expressed within a life-long marital relationship, between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24).

### **Isn't the Bible homophobic?**

- Homosexual sin is often viewed as far worse than any other sin, but actually what the Bible says is that all sexual activity outside of heterosexual, life-long marriage is sin. It should be noted that although sexual sin might not be especially worse than other sin, it may well have far wider harmful consequences in our lives than other sins.
- The reason that homosexual practice is condemned is that it is against how God intended us to relate to one another. God created man and woman and designed them for sexual relationship and procreation to take place in the context of marriage.
- That's why many Bible passages teach that homosexual practice is wrong (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Genesis 19:1-29; 2 Peter 2:6-10; Jude 7; Romans 1:26-32).
- The offer of forgiveness in the gospel covers whatever sin we have committed, including homosexual sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Homosexuals are not barred from God's kingdom, but there is the call for all of us to give up our old way of living and to now live as God designed us to live. Along with this call, by his Spirit God gives us the power to change. Christians who experience homosexual feelings, yet resolve to remain pure, are some of the heroes of the church today.

- Jesus loved sinners without approving their sin, and Christians should have the same attitude.

### **Is the Bible sexist?**

- Actually the Bible teaches that men and women were created equal in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and Christian men and women are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Which other worldview gives such a clear foundation for equality?
- Jesus valued women - in the culture in which he lives it was frowned upon to give much time to listening to/teaching women, but Jesus broke these boundaries (John 4:27; 11:25).
- Equality in dignity and value, does not mean equality in role. The roles of men and women are designed to be complementary (paralleled in male/female bodies!). In marriage, the man is to be the servant leader, the woman is to respond in graceful submission.
- Also in the church, men and women have different roles, reflecting the way God created man and women to relate to one another. Having said that, Christians have different views about exactly how that expresses itself in practice. And also in the early church women played significant roles (e.g. Acts 18:24-26; Romans 16:1-2; Acts 21:8-9; 1 Cor 11:4-5).

### **Why don't Christians practice what they preach?**

- True Christians are people who have come to Jesus recognising that they are moral failures. In Jesus we have found forgiveness and God's power to change. That means Christians are not a finished product, instead we are a work in progress.
- One area Christians struggle with is hypocrisy. We recognise that we often fail and need to rely on God's grace on a daily basis, knowing that because of the cross we are forgiven and have the power to change.
- The church is full of failures, but the church is still dearly loved by God and because of the cross now accepted by God (1 Corinthians 1:1-31).
- The church is not only full of failures, it also has its fair share of fakes. Some people, sometimes the leaders, claim to be Christians when in fact they aren't. We need to be careful to distinguish what is therefore done in the name of Christianity, from what genuine Christianity. It would be very unfair to label all football fans as hooligans just because a small minority behave badly.
- Despite the failures and shortcomings of Christians, churches are still amongst the most loving and accepting communities. Most churches represent a cross section of people from all walks of society.
- And Christians look forward to eternity. When Jesus returns then the work of transformation will be completed and the church will always live lives worthy of the gospel.

### **Isn't religion the cause of all the wars?**

- Which religion started WWI, WW2 and the Cold War? These were the most bloody wars in the whole of history, yet arose from atheistic ideologies.
- Jesus gave a much more penetrating diagnosis: He said the real source of all evil and wars is the human heart (Mark 7:20-23). We are the problem. We know that we do not need to teach children to be selfish and hurt others, it is instinctive. The seed of wars is our hearts. We are no better than e.g. Hitler, if we lived in his situation, with his upbringing, problems, influences we would be capable of doing what he did
- The problem with both man-made religions and worldviews is that they fail to deal with the problem of the heart.
- Jesus taught that the second greatest command is to love your neighbour as yourself and lives this out himself. With that basic teaching and that role model, true Christianity should not be the source of violence.

- This is unique to Christianity: e.g. Mohammad when persecuted, killed his enemies. Jesus when persecuted, died for his enemies. Other man-made religions and worldviews encourage people to hate others.
- Many wars have been done in the name of Christianity, but the question is: Would Jesus have approved? If no, then what does that show about the person who initiated the war?

### **How can God command people in the Old Testament to do violent acts?**

- It is important to note that just because a violent act is recorded in the Bible, it doesn't necessarily mean that God approved of it, it might be recorded simply to illustrate how evil people were.
- God did command Israel to go to war against the people living in the land of Canaan. It is vital to understand why God commanded this. The people living in the land were particularly wicked and rebellious. God had been patient with them for over 400 years, but the time had come to deal with this evil people (Genesis 15:13-16). God uses Israel as the instrument of his judgement on a wicked nation. This people were to be wiped off the face of the earth so that the influence of their evil practices would be gone. God led Israel out to fight these people.
- God does lay down rules of war for Israel - they represent a control of justice, fairness and kindness (Deuteronomy 20). The armies of Israel were required to grant a city a chance to capitulate without bloodshed before moving onto a full-scale siege and the destruction of the city.
- God promised to Israel that he would do the same to them if they fell into the same evil practices. And many years later Israel did fall into wickedness and so God used war against his own people, to judge them.
- The clearing out of wickedness from the promised land is a picture (enacted-prophecy) of what Jesus will do when he returns. On that day he will bring judgement on all people and clear out evil from this universe. If we have a problem with the judgement that fell on the Canaanites, then we will have an even bigger problem with the final judgement day.
- This also shows why the God of the NT is no different to the God of the OT. God is always abounding in love, but utterly just (Exodus 34:6-7). In Revelation 20:11-15 shows the awesome, judging, powerful God who destroys evil.
- For Christians living between Jesus' first and second coming, the battle between good and evil continues, but it is not a physical battle rather it is directed against evil spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus begins this in his own ministry as he casts out many evil spirits. In his death on the cross, Jesus has won the decisive victory over evil powers (Col 2:13-15) and now has authority over them.
- No where does Jesus teach that Christians should further Christianity by means of the sword (Matthew 26:52), rather we share the gospel message with people (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
- When wars occur between the nations of the world, Christians in different contexts must work out their involvement and reaction to those wars using biblical principles.

### **But isn't the Bible open to interpretation?**

- Ultimately God is the author of the Bible, he moved human writers by his Spirit to write the various books of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:16-21). Because he is the author, he caused the Bible to be written in a way that we can understand.
- The clarity of the Bible does not mean every part is simple to understand. If it is a book about the true God we would expect it to have depth, to entice us to look deeper. It would be a book that doesn't allow us to feel that we've mastered it, but rather than to be a book that masters us.
- Our interpretation of any one passage should be governed by the intent of the author and the context. God's ultimate authorship of the Bible means that it has a consistency which means that we can compare one part with the whole Bible. The writings of theologians down the centuries is

another cross-check.

- We need to be consistent: we believe our words should be correctly understood by other people, whether our speech or writing, and so why do we put the Bible in a different category?
- “Why then are there so many arguments about what the Bible says?” The basic answer is human sin: we do not want to listen to God and so sin even distorts our thinking and reading of the Bible (John 5:39-40; 2 Peter 3:15-16).
- As Christians, our understanding of the Bible is part of our sanctification: as we grow in our holiness we also grow in our understanding of God’s Word.

### **How can God blame us for what Adam did?**

- Because we are descended from Adam, we are both guilty (Romans 5:12-21) and also our natures are corrupted (Genesis 8:21).
- We can only blame God, if there has never been a time in our lives when we clearly knew right and wrong, yet chose to do what was wrong.
- We are held guilty for Adam’s sin either because he is our legal representative (Federal view) or because we were literally (though not consciously) in his body (Realistic view, cf. Hebrews 7:9-10). In an individualistic culture we find this an alien idea, but we do still sometimes think in these categories. For example, we talk about “we won the football league” when it was really the team we support who won or the government of one nation might apologise to crimes ‘they’ had committed centuries before against another nation.
- In a parallel way to everyone being counted guilty in Adam, Christians are in Christ and so are counted right before God.
- Experience shows that we must inherit corruption, for children do not have to be taught to misbehave, it is automatic to be selfish.

### **How can you believe in miracles?**

- Miracles in the Bible are not random events or magic shows. Miracles always have a meaning, they are signposts to spiritual realities (e.g. the cursing of the fig tree is a picture of judgement coming on unbelieving Israel).
- The Bible records the evidence that miracles happened, often even convincing the sceptics. So the teachers of the law who were opposed to Jesus had to come up with an alternative explanation: they alleged Jesus did things by Satan’s power (Mark 3:22-30)! They didn’t like the miracles because they had a vested interest, we need to be careful that we too don’t just reject them because we don’t want to listen to Jesus.
- This points us to the heart of the issue is actually about presuppositions. Someone who believes in a creator God won’t have a problem believing that he can do miracles. But for someone who doesn’t (want to?) believe in God, then miracles have to be ruled out.
- “The miracles in the Bible have natural explanations”. It may be true that some miracles in the Bible do have natural explanations, but God still stands behind them. There of course many miracles where natural explanations cannot be found (e.g. Exodus 4:2-4).
- “Miracles are impossible because they break the laws of science”. But why can’t laws of science be broken? Scientific laws are descriptive, not prescriptive. To believe that they must always be obeyed begs the question why is that the case. Why there should be any order in the universe, let alone such order that we cannot conceive of laws ever being broken, is a massive problem if you are atheist. Christians on the other hand believe that God made the universe ordered and it is his prerogative to suspend ‘laws’ temporarily for his purposes.
- “I can’t believe in miracles because I’ve never seen one”. We believe many other things we have

never witnessed. John believes in his gospel that he has given enough eye-witness testimony that we can believe (John 20:24-31; 21:24-25).

- The famous argument, “It is more likely that witnesses of miracles were mistaken/lying than a miracle occurred”, begs the question of how likely the miracle was. For example, the miracle of Jesus’ resurrection is not an isolated event, it fits with the OT prophecies and the rest of Jesus’ life - that dramatically changes the ‘probability’ of it being true.

### **Why does it matter what I believe?**

- People today think that belief is what matters, not the object of belief. This is not how reality works: truth is independent of my assent, of my belief in it. My belief in something does not make that thing true. Therefore, the issue is whether Christianity is true, then I should put my belief in Christ.
- In fact, most people today select what their beliefs according to what we like or don’t like, or according to how they want to behave. As a result our beliefs will often be full of contradictions.
- Sincerity is not the issue (you really can be sincerely wrong!).
- It ultimately does matter what you believe, because what you believe about Jesus determines your eternal destiny.

### **Why did God create the world knowing that many people would end up in hell?**

- We cannot prove a statement like, “It would be better for me not to exist”. How can I profit, if I do not exist, from not existing?
- We may not know the reasons why God created the world knowing what would happen, but we know because of the cross that we can trust him: he is just, abounding in love and in the person of his Son has experienced immense suffering to rescue us from hell. We know he is not playing games with us.

### **Why are there so many denominations?**

- Why is it you expect Christians not to be divided?
- Jesus prayed for unity amongst all those who follow him (John 17:20-23), so it is indeed sad to see so many divisions.
- Jesus and his apostles also warned of false teachers arising, who lead people into serious error by denying central gospel truths (Gal 1:6-9; Col 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:14-3:5). So sometimes splits are necessary for the spiritual health of genuine Christians.
- It is sad when splits occur over secondary matters. Christians are not perfect and we recognise that having divisions amongst genuine Christians is not right.
- Some Christians believe it may be better to have no denominations at all, just independent churches, perhaps affiliated together. Denominations are man-made things and thus likely to fail.
- Having said that, looking from the outside it might seem like there is lots of division, but the reality is that Christians from different churches do work together. For example, Christian Unions are made up of Christians from a wide selection of churches, from many countries, yet they work together with one goal. And it is wonderful to be part of that.

### **How can you have certainty?**

- “I need more evidence... when the stakes are so high, you need lots of evidence”, “Why doesn’t God make himself clearer?” God has made himself clear through creation and in his Son Jesus. John believed that he had given enough evidence in his gospel (John 20:30-31; 21:25). The Bible points to the fact that due to wanting to rebel against God, we do not want to accept the clear evidence.
- Ultimately, the Holy Spirit gives certainty, by convicting us in our hearts of the truth of the gospel

(John 16:7-15; 2 Cor 4:4-6) and for Christians reassuring them that they are genuine children of God (Romans 8:15-16). If you lack this, then ask God to give you certainty by his Spirit as you read the Bible!

### **How can I be sure, given I haven't time to look into all the other religions?**

- Once you've found the truth, you don't need to look any further. It is like asking "Do purple fish exist?", once you've found some, you don't need to look further. So start by examining Christianity.
- Another angle on this is to realise basically there are only two kinds of religions: There are revelational religions and all those claim to stem from the God of the Israel (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, many cults and sects). Christians say these are corruption of special revelation (the Bible). The other religions are non-revelational polytheistic/pantheistic religions that often involve idols (Hinduism and Buddhism). These are a corruption of general revelation (through creation) and what had been revealed to humanity at the beginning. This means that a good place to start is with the Old Testament because all revelational religions claim to be in continuity with this book. The New Testament claims that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. However, when you look at the teaching and scriptures of e.g. Islam, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses you see that they are at odds with the Old Testament and fail to take the claims of Jesus seriously.