

DOES GOD EXIST?

Fourth Quarter 2024
Volume 51 Number 4

*A nonprofit effort to
convince mankind that
God is real and the
Bible is His Word.*

CAN WE HAVE
PURPOSE
WITHOUT GOD?

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Does God Exist? Lectureships

John has not scheduled lectures in a long time, but **visit us** at doesgodexist.org, where many materials are available free of charge.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

—Ephesians 6:12–13 NIV

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How Becoming a Christian Has Given Me Purpose

In the previous quarter of this journal, I shared with you how becoming a Christian gave me a meaningful purpose in life and led me to a career and a ministry. As we think about purpose in life, we must consider whether there is another way to find meaningful purpose. I am in a unique position to address this because the other members of my family have tried several very different means of finding a life purpose.

My father was an atheist academic who attempted to find purpose in his education. He was a disciple of John Dewey and graduated from Columbia University in New York. He was a full professor and the head of the philosophy department at Indiana University in the School of Education. At a state university, there is a “publish or perish” principle that rules the life of a university professor. My father met this requirement with glee, publishing a variety of articles. He spent a year in Europe studying how educational institutions in England, Russia, Germany, France, and Italy handled religion. He left his children in the care of a graduate student at Indiana University while he gathered the data that eventually became a book.



He retired from Indiana University, where he was highly honored and respected. How did this lifelong work fulfill any real purpose for my father? His work was completely outdated before he died. Institutions overseas and in America basically discounted religion altogether, removing it from any participation in state-supported educational institutions. My father spent his last years carving animal figures out of wood. He was forgotten by Indiana University and lost his voice in academia. He was a great professional success, but now his influence is minimal, and his legacy is forgotten.

I have two younger brothers – one ten years younger than me and one 12 years younger. The older of the two brothers became an officer in the Air Force and flew training jets and then helicopters. One of the bases he was assigned to in Arizona was closed, so the Air Force sent him to Rantoul, Illinois, to be the closing officer of the Air Force base there. While at Rantoul, he established a museum on the base, which was closed during his lifetime. He was very successful in seeing that the base was removed from military use. Because of Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant used in Vietnam, he developed Parkinson's. He was eventually mustered out of the Air Force but never advanced in rank beyond being a major. He faced a life with little financial reserves and moved into a military nursing home. In the middle of all of this, he suffered a divorce and had bouts of depression. Near the end of his life, he told me he no longer wanted to be associated with the atheism of our father, and I was able to baptize him into Christ. He left this life at peace with God, but saying his only purpose was to close bases which are now long forgotten.



My youngest brother totally bought into our father's atheism and refused any connection to God or Jesus Christ. This caused him to be uncomfortable with anyone and resulted in depression, which ultimately caused him to be divorced by his wife and alienated from his two sons. Alcohol became an addiction for him, and he lived alone on a lake in Canada in a cabin our father had bought many years before. He died alone of heart failure, feeling his life had no purpose.

Is there any other option for cases like the three I have just cited? The Bible has numerous passages that deal with



Top: © RobWilson/Bigstock.com; bottom: © Sergei Fuss/Bigstock.com

the purposes God has for every life. Old Testament passages such as Exodus 9:16; Jeremiah 32:19; and Proverbs 19:21 refer to God’s desire for his people to have a purpose. Romans 8:28 says, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Ephesians 3:11 tells us that God has an eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 6:12–13 tells Christians that they are major players in the war between good and evil. The entire book of Job describes one man’s role in that war.

How does becoming a great politician, educator, military warrior, or scientist bring purpose if we engage in these things without any connection to our Creator? How long will our accomplishments last if we have no connection to God? I am thankful that after several false starts, I found a role in life that has been full of purpose and that will endure for many years after I die. Laborers, teachers, doctors, and professionals who live a life of service to God and support others fulfill the purpose for which God created them. Their lives will be remembered, and their purpose will continue through the lives of those they served. In the church, each of us can fulfill our purpose in living, avoiding a life of futility and frustration. Have you found the purpose of your life?

—John N. Clayton





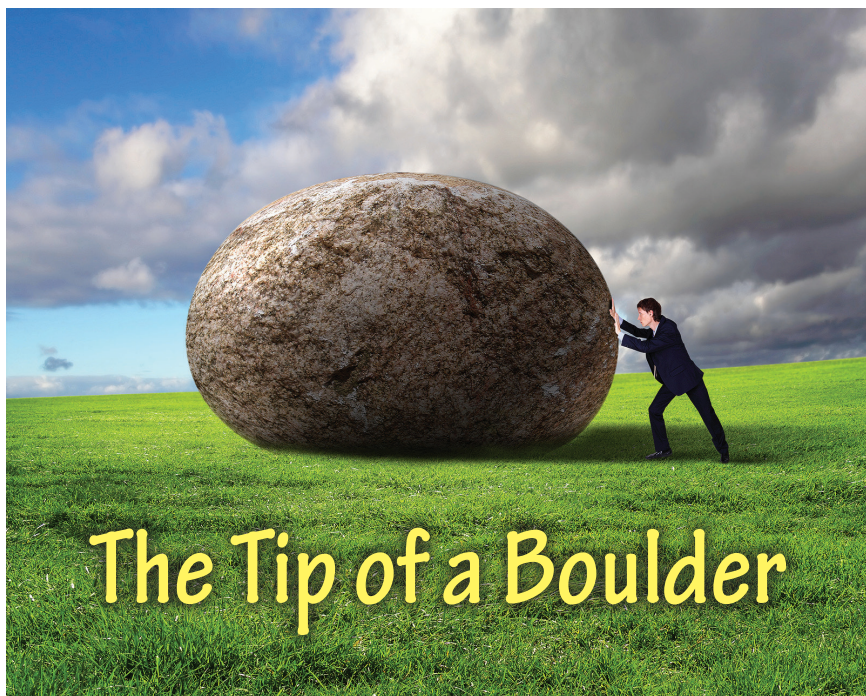
Life is hard. I doubt that anyone would argue with that. Jesus knew about this and spoke of it. In Matthew 24:4–9, Jesus told his disciples, “Watch out that no one deceives you ... you will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... nation will rise against nation There will be famines and earthquakes ... you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me...” He goes on to say that scammers will be present, and the love of many will grow cold. Non-Christians will view those words of Jesus as a reason to reject Christianity.

Many of today’s issues are rooted in the fact that life is hard. Life challenges can lead to suicide, prostitution, drug use, alcoholism, and mental illnesses. The most fundamental reason for this dilemma is that there is no purpose in living for those who reject the teachings of Christ and the Bible.

Beginning in the book of Genesis, the Bible presents the theme that a war is going on between good and evil. It starts in the Garden of Eden and is portrayed in the Book of Job. The New Testament clearly defines the conflict. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against ... the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.” Ephesians 3:9–12 explains the purpose of the church in this war. Atheism dodges the issue of evil by simply denying that it exists, but reality says otherwise.

Yes, life is hard, but for Christians, life is the worst thing you will ever have to face. Romans 8:28 tells us that God will take the awful things in life and make good things come from them. Sometimes, those good things are spiritual, which is what life is about. Do not defeat the purpose of your existence by denying the reality of the spiritual warfare in life.

—JNC



The Tip of a Boulder

Several years ago, I was mowing the grass at our meeting house and noticed a rock sticking up where I intended to mow. The mower blade nicked it when I went over it. Our members had been taking turns mowing, and I wondered why no one had bothered to move the rock. I asked the maintenance guy if it was okay if I dug the rock out and filled the hole with dirt so we would not keep hitting it. He just smiled and said, “Have at it.” I learned that the “rock” was the tip of a boulder.

Here in Michigan, we have rocks and boulders carried in by glaciers in the past. When I went to work with the shovel, I found that this was more of a job than I thought. By the time I got to the bottom of the boulder, I had dug an enormous hole and needed to use my truck to pull it out.

This story reminds me of people. I recently talked with a neighbor about a neighborhood issue and noticed a tear rolling down his cheek and a clenched fist at his side. Our conversation stopped, and I asked him if he was okay. I learned that his wife had just left him for another man, and the neighborhood issue was just the tip of the boulder he was dealing with.

In 1 Corinthians 5, we read about a congregation where one member was cohabiting with his father’s wife (not his mother). The congregation not only tolerated the situation but was “puffed up,” meaning they were laughing it off. That sin was a rock everyone could

see, and Paul said that even the pagans could see it. The rest of the letter in 1 Corinthians shows a boulder of problems. In chapter 11, verses 18–30, we read of division, selfishness, drunkenness, and a bunch of people who were “weak and sickly.”

In America today, we have violent protests, corruption in our government, racism, profanity in our movies and music, and no fixed



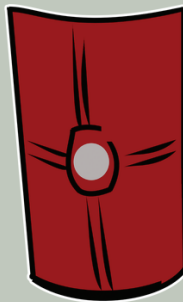
standard of morality. Those are just the tip of a boulder that has become very large. Even many churches today have become entertainment venues instead of promoters of God’s will. This is the tip of a boulder that is a lack of belief in God and in the Bible as a

guiding force for life. You cannot read Galatians 3:28 or study John 4:5–43 and not see that God calls us to be one in him.

John the Baptist said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Get ready for the coming of the Lord” (John 1:23). This ministry is saying very much the same thing. We urge the world to understand that we are on a road to disaster. The rocks of division, immorality, and war are just the tip of a boulder that must be removed.

—JNC

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MUSEUM OF
ANCIENT
HISTORY

ADDRESS CHANGE? To remain on our mailing list, please give us both your old and new addresses with both zip codes at least six to eight weeks before the move, if at all possible. Thanks!



Christian Minimalism

LOVE THE LORD
YOUR GOD with ALL YOUR
HEART
WITH ALL WITH ALL
YOUR ← ε & 3 → YOUR
SOUL MIND
THIS IS the 1st and GREATEST
COMMANDMENT

Matthew 22: 37-38

One of the earmarks of Christianity is the level of involvement it calls for. When someone asked Jesus Christ what is the greatest commandment, He replied, “Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart and with ALL your soul and with ALL your mind” (emphasis added).

This is actually a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5 and is unpopular in our world today. Our culture expects Christian minimalism and has coined labels to denigrate Christian involvement in life.

So-called “Christian nationalism” is called evil and destructive. Christian involvement in the military has been suppressed based on it being too exclusive. Issues such as gender transformation, abortion, and gay lifestyle choices are promoted and held in esteem in America today. The government shuts down any attempt by Christians to point out the consequences of these choices. The media and politicians apply words such as “extreme” to anyone who is identified as having Christian values.

It is essential to point out that no one following the teachings of Christ would advocate for Christianity being part of any political persuasion. Jesus made a clear declaration that his followers would “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21). In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7, Jesus tells his followers to love their enemies, turn the other cheek, and to go the second mile. Christians might not agree with someone else’s choice, but Jesus forbids any physical action against that individual.

What bothers those who attack Christianity is the level of commitment that it promotes. One of the great parables that Jesus taught tells of a man going on a business trip who gives three servants things to take care

of while he is gone. One gets five units, one two units, and the other one unit “according to their ability.” When the man returns, the one given five units and the one given two units receive the same praise because they have used what they were given. The man with one unit receives condemnation because he buried what the master loaned to him and did not use it (see Matthew 25:14–30).

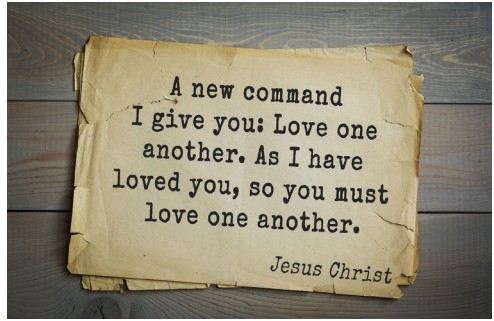
Instead of Christian minimalism, committed Christians will give 100% to promote the teachings of Christ. This upsets the media and some politicians, who then try to destroy Christianity, and that is happening in America. At the same time, some call themselves “Christian” but want to be minimal

in their involvement. They ask questions like: “Do I have to attend?” “How much do I have to give?” “What is the minimum I can do?”

We do not ask, “What is the minimum I must do to have a good marriage?” Neither do we ask, “What is the least I can do to be a good parent, a good soldier, a good teacher, etc?” Why is our culture so opposed to those who act on 100% constructive action? The answer is that skeptics want us to practice Christian minimalism because they feel threatened when Christians live out their faith 100%.

—JNC

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Both believers and non-believers are affected by their mindsets. In the 55 years our ministry has existed, we have found that the mindset of people on both sides of issues is the source of conflict between atheists and believers, evolutionists and creationists. Dr. Katherine Beals, an education expert, distinguishes between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset.

The fixed mindset leads to the following ways of thinking: I know best; This is good enough; I'll never be that smart; I want to avoid making mistakes; I give up. As you read those five statements, consider what you hear from older people in established congregations today. They reject any proposal to do things differently even though there is no scriptural reason for not using another method. The same problem exists with evolutionists who are so fixed in their mindset that they refuse to listen to any attempt to harmonize belief in God with their evolutionary theories.

On the other hand, the growth mindset leads to these ways of thinking: Is this my best work? Mistakes help me learn; Feedback is valuable; I improve with practice; I will not give up. Jesus commonly used the phrase, "What do you think?" The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 is full of admonitions to the people of his day to think with a growth mindset.

Interestingly, Jesus Christ ran into the issue of mindsets as he dealt with people in matters of faith. The Pharisees and Sadducees had fixed mindsets, and they crucified Jesus because he did not fit their mindset. At the same time, gentiles had a growth mindset, wanting to know more and being willing to change. For example, the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 shows that he had a growth mindset and was willing to change. In Paul's missionary journeys, he found that Jews had a fixed mindset while the Gentiles had a growth mindset.

The church today is struggling with the issue of mindsets. Young people have a growth mindset, and the older congregations have a fixed mindset. This is manifested in many ways. The real problem is that congregations with a fixed mindset will eventually die out. From the beginning, Christianity, with its growth mindset, grew and is still growing. Fixed mindset congregations will die when the fixed mindset members die, but the Lord's church will continue to grow and expand. Our ministry is about growth and learning. Will you not join us?

—JNC



A Conflict That Should Not Exist

by Roland Earnst

We have said many times that science and the Bible are friends. We need both for an enjoyable life. Unfortunately, many believers reject science because they think it conflicts with faith, and many unbelievers reject faith because they believe it is contrary to science. Those are false ideas of a conflict that should not exist. The truth is that both science and the Bible testify to God's existence.

Science helps us understand the physical world. Physics and chemistry give us new and better ways to do things. Medical science helps us live healthier and longer lives. We need science because it benefits us. Likewise, the Bible benefits us in many ways. It tells us how to live fulfilled lives in peace and harmony with each other and with the natural world. Most importantly, the Bible also tells us about Jesus Christ and how we can live beyond this physical existence.

Dr. John C. Lennox is an emeritus fellow of mathematics and philosophy of science at Oxford University. In a debate with leading atheist scientist Richard Dawkins, Lennox illustrated the difference between science and biblical faith very simply. He said, “Science can tell you what will happen when you put arsenic in your Aunt Tilley’s tea, but it cannot tell whether or not you should.” That simple statement suggests why this is a conflict that should not exist.



Atheists insist that a person does not have to believe to live a moral life. It is true that sometimes atheists live lives that appear to

be more morally upright than some who claim to be believers. However, without faith in God and his Word, what is the objective basis for deciding what is right or wrong? We cannot make valid moral choices without a moral compass to tell us which direction to go.



Science gives us many things that make our lives in this world better. The Bible and faith also improve our lives and the lives of those around us. But faith also gives us some things that science cannot. Our faith in God and the Bible gives us a purpose and reason to live and enjoy this life. Beyond that, it gives us hope for a better existence without the pain and suffering we face now. In science, we find solutions to make life more enjoyable. In the Bible, we discover a reason for our existence and hope for a better future. The animosity between science and faith is a conflict that should not exist.



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Salvation

by Thayer Salisbury

Sometimes, even unbelievers seem to understand the connection between conviction and outreach. Some time ago, an article in *The Atlantic* cited Michael, a Dartmouth student and atheist, who said:

I really can't consider a Christian a good, moral person if he isn't trying to convert me ... Christianity is something that if you really believed it, it would change your life and you would want to change [the lives] of others. I haven't seen too much of that. — *Michael*

"Listening to Young Atheists," *The Atlantic*, June 5, 2013, page 10

Similarly, Penn Jillette, the atheist illusionist and comedian, said:

I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward ... How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? — *Penn Jillette*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6md638smQd8>

Don't underestimate the role of convictions in changing lives. Becoming convinced that the gospel is true is a vital step in motivating Christian ministry: outreach, witness, evangelism, church planting, and world missions. Why do we expend so much energy, time and treasure in these endeavours? Because we are convinced that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life and that we can only come to the Father through him. Let this truth sink into our souls, and we will find it affecting every aspect of our lives, "taking every thought captive," as the apostle Paul might say, so that sinners might be saved (2 Corinthians 10:5).

See our videos at www.doesgodexist.tv



How God Used Georges Lemaître

by Larry B.

(Larry is an inmate
impacted by our
prison ministry.)

Belgian-born Georges Lemaître was a young and upcoming engineering student when Germany invaded his homeland in 1914. Out of necessity, he put his education on hold to serve in the Belgian army, where he fought in the Battle of Yser. Afterward, he studied physics at the Catholic University at Louvain. Then, he was admitted to the Catholic seminary in Malines, where Cardinal Mercier granted him special permission to study Einstein's General Theory of Relativity.

In 1923 after completing his advanced education and with a clerical collar in place, Lemaître crossed the English Channel to work under the famous Sir Arthur Eddington at the Cambridge Observatory. By 1925 Lemaître's grasp of how General Relativity fits into our cosmic history exceeded that of Einstein himself. While Einstein stubbornly fought to maintain Aristotle's Static Universe theory, in 1927 Lemaître published an article in an obscure French journal suggesting that the available Doppler redshift data indicated that our universe is expanding.

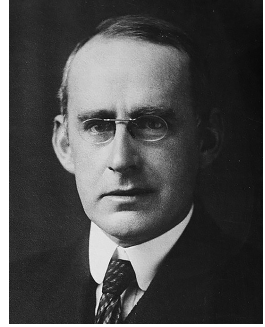
In 1929 Edwin Hubble released observations obtained by his assistants at his observatory on Mount Wilson that confirmed Lemaître's little-known predictions. Hubble's announcement came as no surprise to Lemaître, who had already shown in equation number 23 of his 1927 paper that distant galaxies were



Hubble Telescope Photo

getting further away from Earth in a manner predictable by the equation $V=Hd$, where V is the velocity of recession, d is the distance the subject galaxy is from Earth, and H is an experimentally determined constant. This relationship became known as Hubble's law, with H being known as Hubble's constant.

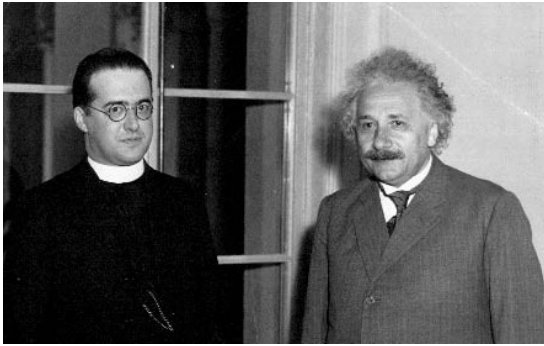
The calibration details needed to be tweaked, but by the end of 1929, the cosmological community was starting to realize that our universe was indeed expanding, not static, as Aristotle and Einstein believed. Also, they began to ponder many theories that could explain away our universe's expansion, or at least the appearance of expansion. In 1930, Sir Arthur Eddington called a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society to consider these matters. Also, he ordered that an English translation of Lemaître's overlooked 1927 paper be immediately published for all to study.



Arthur Eddington

By 1931 Einstein had conceded that his inclusion of a fudge factor (aka, cosmological constant) on the left side of his equation for General Relativity so that a static universe would result was the

biggest blunder of his life. Although Einstein removed the cosmological constant from his equation, Lemaître felt it needed to be moved to the equation's right side, not eliminated. Lemaître's preliminary thought processes were published in the May 1931 edition of *Nature* in a 457-word article



Lemaître and Einstein

entitled "The Beginning of the World from the Point of View of Quantum Theory." Herein, Lemaître explained that we must consider the interplay between Quantum Mechanics, General Relativity, and gravity to understand how our universe began.

Subsequently, Lemaître explained that a cosmological constant was needed on the right side of the equation for General Relativity to account for the energy variations our universe had gone through during its different stages of expansion. Next came the shocker. Lemaître hypothesized that the expansion that was being observed first began with the explosion of a primal atom, an explosion that he believed should still be evidenced by faint traces of cosmic background

radiation, which Lemaître likened to the ashes and smoke one sees lingering in a cold night sky after an explosive display of fireworks.

His theory initially was somewhat crude, but Lemaître had the best understanding of General Relativity and its cosmic implications for anyone then alive, bar none. Before long, his theory almost perfectly matched today's full-blown Big Bang theory. Not surprisingly, by 1950, Lemaître had become accepted as the father of Big Bang Cosmology.

Due to his also being a Catholic priest, agnostic and atheistic cosmologists were skeptical of his motives. However, as time passed, Lemaître gained more clout within the scientific community. The Catholic church also found that the science Lemaître had discovered (not invented) had great relevance. This fact prompted Pope Pius XII to approve the big bang theory in 1951 as scientific confirmation of the first few verses of Genesis.

Just three days before Lemaître's death in June 1966, he was notified of what became the cosmological shot heard around the world: Bell Lab researchers' accidental discovery of the cosmic background radiation left over from the Big Bang, just as Lemaître had predicted.



Lemaître was still conscious and could now gleefully rest in peace. In 2018, the International Astronomical Union honored Lemaître by changing the name Hubble's law to the Hubble-Lemaître law, with H becoming known as the Hubble-Lemaître constant.

God has a way of using certain people to help non-scientists and scientists alike appreciate the beauty and awe of the universe he has so perfectly tweaked for life as we know it. Georges Lemaître was 70 years ahead of his time, and his contributions remain an eternal tribute to our Creator.

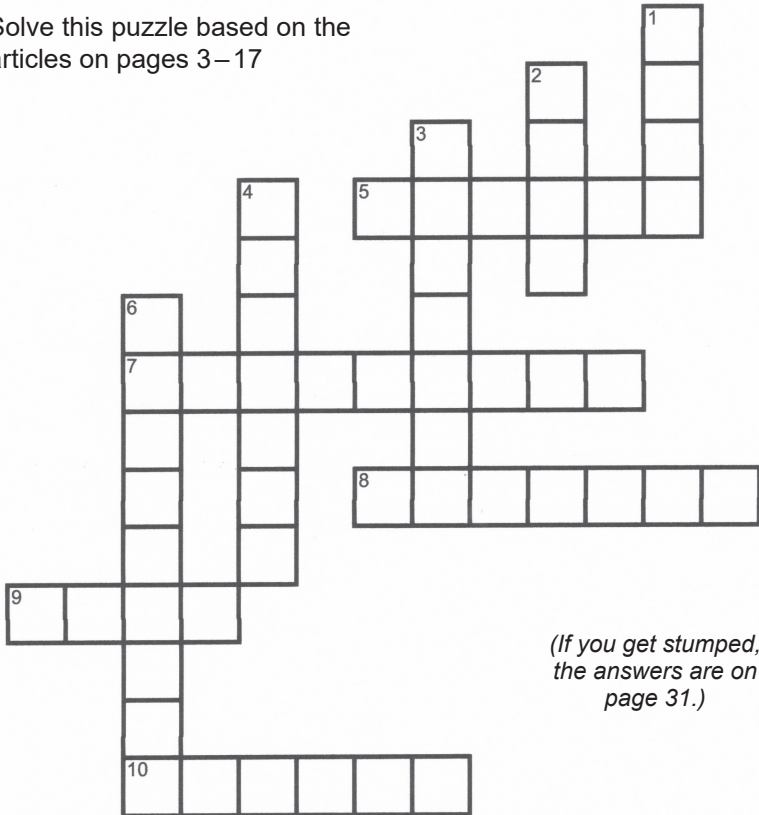
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Does God Exist?

4th Quarter 2024 Crossword

Solve this puzzle based on the articles on pages 3–17



*(If you get stumped,
the answers are on
page 31.)*

Across

- [5] Believing the _____ is true motivates us to tell others.
- [7] Lemaître predicted that general relativity showed the universe is _____.
- [8] Science cannot tell you whether or not to put _____ in Aunt Tilley's tea.
- [9] Love God with all your heart, soul, and _____.
- [10] Christians must adopt a _____ mindset.

Down

- [1] Lemaître's prediction was confirmed by _____ Lab researchers in 1966.
- [2] Life is hard, but there is _____.
- [3] Sometimes visible problems are just the tip of a _____.
- [4] Each person needs a _____ in life.
- [6] An expanding universe must have had a _____.

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Much of the material in this publication
appeared earlier on that website.



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AND SUPPORT!

SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's note: Atheists attempt to suggest that scientists are intelligent people who have rejected faith and do not believe in God. The fact is that some of the most productive scientists who have ever lived were believers in God. We share some of their thoughts with you in this column.

*Allan Sandage
(1926 – 2010)*

American Astronomer

*Received Ph.D. from Cal Tech in 1953.
Staff Member Emeritus with the Carnegie
Observatories in Pasadena, California.*

*He was considered the preeminent observational
cosmologist of his time.*

*He received the Crafoord Prize (the equivalent of the
Nobel prize in astronomy), the National Medal of
Science, the Eddington Medal, and the
Helen Warner Prize for Astronomy.*

*Sandage is known for calculating the rate at
which the universe expands and its age by
observing distant stars.*



“I was practically an atheist in my childhood. Science is what led me to the conclusion that the world is much more complex than we can explain. I can only explain the mystery of existence to myself by the Supernatural.”

**Visit the Clayton Museum
of Ancient History at
York University, York, Neb.**



Cynthia's Corner



Can Humans Have a Purpose for Living Without God?

There seem to be more nonbelievers in the world than there are believers. How do people who do not believe in God and Jesus live their lives? Do people without Christ have a meaningful purpose in living? What is their standard for right and wrong? Do they live by “the Golden Rule” (do to others what you would have them do to you—Matthew 7:12)? How do they treat others? Are there natural consequences for bad behavior, bad choices, or just bad luck? What happens to them when life gets difficult?

When work is hard or unsatisfying, and money does not pay the bills, or when friends and family hurt you or disappoint you or leave you, or worse, when a loved one dies, or you have serious health problems, how does a nonbeliever handle all the ups and downs of life? Some people turn to alcohol, drugs, sex, porn, gambling—anything to drown their sorrows. If there is no purpose in living except for self-gratification and self-fulfillment, and life gets hard, lonely, or painful, why go on? If there is no life after death and no eternal consequences for this life, why not end your life when it becomes too hard to bear?

In contrast, Christians have a God-given reason to be alive, no matter their circumstances. All Christians have a purpose in their lives given by God (Ephesians 3:10–12). Most of us cannot preach or teach, but we still have a role in spreading the good news about salvation in Jesus Christ and having a relationship with our Creator in this life and eternally. It is up to all of us to spread God’s message of love, forgiveness, joy, and hope. God gives us purpose. He created us to do good deeds (Ephesians 2:10), serve others, and help as many as possible to go to heaven with us.



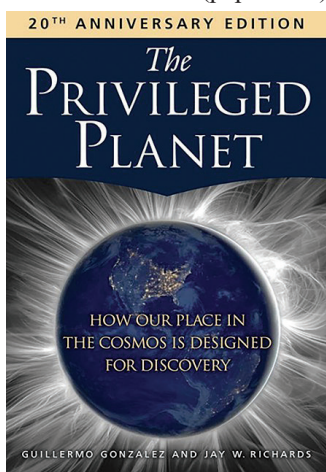
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The Privileged Planet

by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards,
20th Anniversary Edition, Gateway, © 2024,
\$35.00 (paperback), 472 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1684517022



This book was written by two Ph.D. scientists with widely published scientific articles and books on science and faith. It has three sections plus two appendices, one dealing with the Drake equation and the other with panspermia. One chapter deals with objections to the book's message, and 75 pages document the material. The scientific information is accurate and well-explained but relatively technical. The content reflects the authors' academic ability and knowledge and can be a helpful study for academically well-trained students.

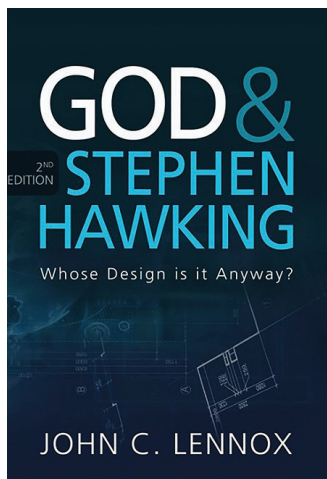
The book's first section, titled "Our Local Environment," contains 103 pages of facts about Earth and its place in space. The second section, "The Broader Universe," discusses what we know about stars and galaxies. It contains 12 color prints of pictures and spectrographs and 91 pages explaining how we know the composition of the cosmos beyond our solar system. The third section deals with the implications of the first two sections, including the meaning and history of the Copernican principle, the anthropic principle, and how we should read the book of nature.

The last section is the one skeptics complain about because it destroys their view that creation is a big accident. It shows the designed structure of the cosmos to support life forms like us. We highly recommend this book, especially for college students or people swept up in media attacks on the credibility of the Bible and God's role in creation.

God and Stephen Hawking

by John C. Lennox

Lion Books, Second Edition, © 2021,
\$13.99 (paperback), 112 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0745980980



Stephen Hawking, one of the most outstanding scientists of the past century, was not well-versed in philosophy or theology. His approach to these disciplines was to dismiss them. In his book *The Grand Design*, he wrote: “Philosophy is dead. It has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly in physics. As a result, scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.”

Besides ignorance of philosophy, Hawking had no understanding of what the Bible tells us about the nature of God. One of Hawking’s best friends, Martin

Rees, said: “I know Stephen Hawking well enough to know that he has read very little philosophy and even less theology, so I don’t think we should attach any weight to his views on this topic.”

Hawking believed God was a creation of human ignorance, similar to the many polytheistic gods of primitive tribes. John C. Lennox’s book, *God and Stephen Hawking*, explains Hawking’s misunderstandings in great detail. Lennox is an Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford and an Emeritus Fellow in Mathematics and the Philosophy of Science at Green Templeton College.

We have often said that the creation had a beginning from nothing, that the beginning was caused, and that the cause was a mind, not blind mechanistic chance. Hawking tried to refute God’s existence by denying that there was a beginning. To do that, he redefined “nothing.” Lennox does a brilliant job of showing that Hawking was violating fundamental laws of philosophy and that all evidence points to the fact there was a beginning to time, space, and matter/energy.

Using mathematics, Lennox presents clear evidence that the beginning was caused and that it could not possibly be by chance. This is an excellent book to give a college student or a well educated person struggling with their faith. We recommend it highly.

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DANDY DESIGNS

Baobab Trees

Fossil evidence of ancient trees known as baobabs found in Madagascar shows that they are among Earth's oldest life forms. This genus, known as *Adansonia*, has eight species in Madagascar, Africa, and northwest Australia. Because of their shape, people call them "upside-down trees." The nickname "tree of life" comes from the fact that they can live for thousands of years and grow to huge sizes.



The fruits of baobab trees are a superfood, and people use their trunks to make fibers for rope or clothing. The baobab's large white flowers open at dusk, attracting bats as pollinators. The branches of the trees are nesting sites for birds. These trees look very different from modern trees. They have a pyramid shape with a large trunk that stores vast amounts of water and no limbs or leaves except at the top. They might remind you of a giant toadstool, but the shape is ideal for storing water and the safety of bats and birds.

DNA studies show a starting point for baobab trees in Madagascar, tracking their journey on ocean currents to Australia and Africa, where local conditions shaped them into what we see today. Scientific data shows no connection between baobabs and gymnosperms like pine trees and modern trees like oaks and palms.

Attention has been drawn to the fact that baobab trees are so useful that they are being overharvested. Genesis 2:9 says, "God made all kinds of trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." The diversity we see in creation speaks of an intelligent purpose for plants. Everywhere we look, we see the benefits plants provide. Baobabs remind us that we live in an extraordinary place, and we must not let greed, ignorance, and selfishness destroy what God has given us.

See our videos at www.doesgodexist.tv

Trout Fins



Technology has allowed us to see the design of things in the natural world. Dr. Haibo Dong at the University of Virginia used 3D computer models to study the turbulence created with each fin of a trout. *American Scientist* magazine states, “Interactions between swirling eddies created by a swimming trout show how its body is optimally laid out for energy-efficient movement.”

A trout’s body is shaped to move through the water with less drag than any other shape. However, the role of various fins is not easy to see. Virtually all fish have a dorsal fin on the back and a caudal fin on the tail. Trout have other fins, including pectoral fins near their heads and pelvic fins near the center of their bellies. Toward the back of the trout’s body is a small adipose fin on top and an anal fin on the underside. The researchers have shown that the fin locations increase the thrust the tail produces. The anal fin produces 8.6% more thrust reducing the drag by 18.6%. Trout fins are designed for efficient swimming, or as the researchers conclude, “the whole trout is optimized for efficient swimming.”

Other fish have different fin arrangements to match their survival needs. A tuna living in the open ocean has a different layout of fins because it is designed for speed rather than efficiency. Fish that confine their existence to the bottom of a lake or river will not have the same fin layout as the tuna or the trout. For example, catfish have a fin arrangement designed for protection. Those of us who have grabbed a catfish incorrectly may have suffered a painful jab from its fins. Trout fins are designed for efficient swimming since they make long migrations, swimming upstream and sometimes over waterfalls.

Our technology allows us to understand the various designs we see in living things. Trout fishermen know that catching a trout differs from catching any other fish because of their muscular mobility. Research has shown that the trout’s design shows wisdom right down to the shape and location of its fins. We suggest that this design is the product of a Designer, not just blind opportunistic chance.

News and Notes

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON NEWS AND NOTES: The stories in News and Notes are condensed from articles previously published on our website www.DoesGodExist.today. You can use the QR codes with each of these articles to see the original posts for more details and references. There are also many other interesting and informative articles on that website each day. We encourage you to follow us daily on “Does God Exist? Today.” On that website, you can also subscribe to our free weekly e-mail update. We call it “The Best of the Week from DOES GOD EXIST?” It contains links to the most popular of our posts on DGE? Today and our Facebook page ([Facebook.com/evidence4god](https://www.facebook.com/evidence4god)).

JUST RIGHT FOR LIFE: Since astronomers have discovered more than 5,000 exoplanets orbiting stars other than our Sun, many insist there must be life elsewhere in the cosmos. If there is life out there, God created it, but the Bible only speaks to our planet. A “Goldilocks” planet is at the proper distance from its star, so the temperature is “just right” for liquid water to exist on the surface. Some exoplanets appear to be in the habitable zones of their stars, but many other factors must also be just right for life to exist there.



To support life, a planet must be the right size, have a stable orbit inside the habitable zone of a stable star, and have the right atmosphere. It must also have working plate tectonics and a large moon to maintain a stable axis tilt. It must also be in the habitable zone of its galaxy—not near the center where it would be exposed to lethal gamma-ray bursts.

Another star system requirement for life would be having outer planets large enough and in the correct position to sweep away asteroids and comets that would bombard an inner planet. To support life, a planet also needs a strong magnetic field to shield the surface from the star’s radiation and cosmic rays. The bottom line is that Earth is a special place created by God for a special purpose and is unique among all other known objects in the cosmos.



ANIMAL MEMORY CAPACITY: Memory is designed into animals to benefit them and other life forms in their ecosystem. We see an excellent example of partial memory in squirrels who bury massive numbers of acorns but only remember where they put a fraction of them. The squirrels have enough to eat while they plant trees over a large area.

On the other hand, some life forms, such as the Clark's nutcracker, remember virtually 100%. They survive on pinion seeds, and a single bird may hide as many as 30,000 seeds, placing 4 or 5 seeds in each spot. When hungry, the bird will return to each hiding place to get food. When spring arrives, it will have consumed almost all the seeds hidden in thousands of locations.



God has given different memory storage capacities in the brains of each creature. In the animal world, the memory capacity is designed to benefit the animals and the environment. Trying to explain that by evolutionary reasoning is difficult. Those of us who believe in God believe it speaks of his wisdom and design in the world around us.



NEANDERTHAL DATA: Past research has not shown that Neanderthals lived together in communities. However, Neanderthal DNA in Siberia indicates a possible community, and some



600 footprints recently found near Normandy, France, indicate a group of adults with children and teenagers. Another interesting discovery is that the communities cared for individuals with de-

formities or severe injuries, and Neanderthal burials indicate that they showed special care to children.

The fact that Neanderthals clearly lived more than 6,000 years ago flies in the face of some denominational teaching about Earth's age. The point is that the Bible is silent on how long ago Adam lived.

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There is also a tendency to make Adam in our physical image when the Bible says Adam was created in God's spiritual image.

Since you and I are created in God's image, we all have equal value and demonstrate spiritual characteristics and talents. These include creative ability in art and music, the capacity to worship, empathy and sympathy, and guilt, which have nothing to do with our physical or racial makeup. New data on Neanderthals shows that they demonstrated some of those characteristics, and we have some Neanderthal markers in our DNA.



SMOKE IN THE AIR AFFECTS TREES: Researchers at Colorado State University have found that even trees are affected



by smoke from wildfires, but they have a defense system designed into them. Plant leaves have pores called stomata that do the opposite of our lungs by taking in carbon dioxide and expelling oxygen. However, taking in smoke could interfere with this process. The researchers found that

when smoke wafted across ponderosa pines, the trees responded by closing their stomata, essentially holding their breath.

Since these trees are affected by smoke, they have a designed response to what might damage their ability to absorb carbon dioxide. This is just one more example of the incredible planning that went into their creation.



MAID AND HOSPICE CARE: "Medical aid in dying," or MAiD, has been accepted in Europe, Canada, and other places. As expected, there have been abuses, and for that reason, the European Court of Human Rights recently ruled that access to assisted suicide is not a human right.

Now, the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) has announced a policy change that allows hospice nurses to participate in assisted suicide. The statement reads: "Nursing care for patients considering MAiD and their families is crucial to ensure that patients and families are not overtly or inadvertently disenfranchised or stigmatized as they proceed with MAiD and that they experience a safe and comfortable death, free from complications."

Christians have grave concerns with medically assisted suicide. When hospice nurses are allowed to administer



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“medical aid in dying,” how long will it be before they are required to do so, regardless of religious and ethical objections?

MEDICATION ABORTION: Medication abortion is a two-drug cocktail that ends the life of the developing child during the first trimester of pregnancy. It is essential for women considering medication abortion to know what it does and its side effects. The first pill is mifepristone/RU-486, which prevents the pre-born baby from receiving hormonal support (progesterone) essential for development. The second pill (misoprostol)



causes the uterus to contract and expel the baby. The process is painful for the woman.

The Mayo Clinic says the side effects include vomiting, fever, nausea, chills, diarrhea, and headache. Women may need painkillers to manage pain after a medication abortion. The Mayo Clinic also says that a woman undergoing a pill-induced medication abortion needs access to emergency services. Complications include hemorrhaging and infection. A 17-year study showed that of 423,000 abortions, there were 121,283 confirmed emergency room visits within 30 days.

When humans interfere with God’s design, there are always problems, and the miracle of conception and birth is a design that works.



PLANT NEUROSCIENCE? Several “plant neuroscientists” have written papers claiming that plants have intelligence and cognition and experience pain and other feelings. This is not the work of crackpots but of reputable scientists writing in professional journals.

The so-called plant neuroscientists accuse scientists who reject their claims of being “animal chauvinists.” If you reject eating plants because they have feelings and experience pain, you will also have to reject eating insects or animals of any kind, such as fish, birds, or even farm animals. That leaves you with nothing to eat.

In Genesis 1:29, God tells Adam and Eve, “I have given you every herb bearing seed ... and every tree in which there is fruit for food.” In Genesis 9:3, God told Noah, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you even as the green plants I have given you.” God gave humans the capacity to have adequate food and challenged us to manage his environment with intelligence and respect.

The fact is that plants do not have neurons. I know people who talk to their plants, and I must admit that I have spoken to my car when it was not working. Whether plants or vehicles, our conversations are for our benefit, not what we are taking to. God has designed plants to feed, shade, and show us beauty, but they are not created like us and are not to be worshipped.



SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH: An interesting creature lives in the ocean off southern Florida and the Bahamas. The smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*) is a member of the ray family with a snout lined with needle-sharp teeth used to cut vegetation or chop up a predator that gets too close. The amazing thing about this fish is that the babies are live-born. The question is how can a baby sawfish avoid cutting up its mother or siblings before birth.

Researchers at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in Charlotte Harbor have answered that question.



They found that the baby sawfish’s teeth are housed in a sheath while inside the mother. It is essentially a second skin that the smalltooth sawfish sheds about four days after birth. The researchers say the sheath feels like paraffin wax, which you cannot peel off, but with a slight

give. The chemical composition of the sheath shows that it has two layers made of proteins similar to ordinary skin.

The ocean is full of living things with incredibly complex and specialized designs, enabling them to exist in unique environments. The lead researcher, Gregg Poulakis, said, “It’s a cool thing Mother Nature figured out to protect mom from those calcified teeth and protect siblings from sword fighting in the uterus.” Perhaps it was not “Mother Nature” that “figured (it) out” but an intelligent Creator.



ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 18

ACROSS: 5-Gospel; 7-expanding; 8-arsenic; 9-mind;
10-growth

DOWN: 1-bell; 2-hope; 3-boulder; 4-purpose;
6-beginning

Thank you for your support in 2024.
 We pray that 2025
 will be a great year
 for you and your family.

John and Cynthia Clayton

Roland Earnst

Linda Glover

Karl Marcussen

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