

TRUE STORY

An Apologetic for Christianity

MAVEN'S Apologetics Immersive Experience

TRUE STORY

AN APOLOGETIC FOR CHRISTIANITY

Brett Kunkle & Chad Merrihew

SAMPLE

NAME: _____

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Students, Read This. Now.

You're about to embark on MAVEN's Apologetics Immersive Experience, where your beliefs will be challenged like never before. You'll dialogue with dedicated atheists who don't believe God exists and will use arguments and evidence to prove you wrong. You'll encounter skeptics of all stripes, who will challenge the claims of Christianity.

Why would we create an experience like this?

Because we're not afraid and you shouldn't be either. See, *we think Christianity is TRUE*—true whether anyone believes it or not—and therefore, we also think every objection and argument against Christianity will be flawed by its very nature. So, we're not afraid of putting truth to the test.

We are going to purposefully expose you to different worldviews because we've discovered such exposure actually helps inoculate you from those false views. Why do people get a flu shot? To inoculate themselves from the flu virus. Think about it. We purposely expose ourselves to a virus *in order to protect from the virus*. That's exactly what we'll do with you during the Apologetics Immersive Experience. You will walk through a number of challenges to your faith so you can see firsthand that Christianity can stand up to the toughest questions any skeptic can ask.

Not only will The Apologetics Immersive Experience give you confidence that God is real. Not only will you grow in your ability to show others compelling evidence for Christian truth. You will also see how the truth of Jesus Christ transforms how we live. By the time you get home, we pray that God's Holy Spirit will give you a love for the lost and a passion to go and make disciples of Jesus.

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Full Name: _____ Date: _____
Email Address: _____

The Before Survey

Before diving into the Apologetics Immersive Experience, complete this survey. Answer as honestly and thoroughly as you can.

Short Answers...

1. Why are you a Christian?

2. List three pieces of evidence, pointing to God's existence.

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. What is truth?

4. Why is the Bible trustworthy and authoritative?

5. In one to two sentences, explain what the gospel is.

Rate Yourself

For the following questions, rate yourself using the following scale:

- 1 = Completely uncomfortable
- 2 = Not very comfortable
- 3 = A bit hesitant
- 4 = Fairly confident
- 5 = Completely comfortable & confident

6. How confident are you that Christianity is true?

1 2 3 4 5

7. How comfortable are you standing up for Christian truth and values with your close friends and family?

1 2 3 4 5

8. How comfortable are you standing up for Christian truth and values in a public setting? For example, at school, at work, on a sports team, in a school club, etc...

1 2 3 4 5

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SECTION ONE

TRAINING SESSIONS

TRUE STORY: *AN APOLOGETIC FOR CHRISTIANITY*

Section one of this guidebook is an interactive engagement tool to help you dive deep into the truth that will be taught during the six-week teaching series, *TRUE STORY*.

Before you engage skeptics, you first need to study and learn the key arguments for Christianity. In this section you will find the following tools for each session:

- **Session Outlines:** During each session, track along with the teachings by filling in the blanks and taking additional notes.
- **Session Reviews:** After each session, take a minute to quiz yourself on what you retained by completing, from memory, each session's review.
- **Session Discussions:** Lastly, dialogue with your team about each topic, using the discussion questions.

Don't be a passive listener, be an active learner. Use these tools!

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Session One

Why I Am a Christian

"Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

C. S. Lewis

Session One Outline

Question for *An Atheist...*

Why are you an atheist?

- I read a really good _____
- I grew up in an atheist _____
- I _____ believe in atheism
- Atheism _____ my life

Question for *You...*

I'm a Christian because...?

- I believe in the _____
- I grew up in a Christian _____
- I just have _____

"Faith is generally nothing more than the permission religious people give one another to believe things strongly without evidence."

Sam Harris | Atheist

- God has changed my _____

"I had a crisis of faith. I thought you had to experience things if you want to know right from wrong. I'd go to Christian revivals and be moved by the Holy Spirit, and I'd go to rock concerts and feel the same fervor. Then I'd be told, 'that's the devil's music! Don't partake in that!' I wanted to experience things religion said not to experience...when I got untethered from the comfort of religion, it wasn't a loss of faith for me, it was a discovery of self."

Brad Pitt | Actor

Why *Should* We Believe?

I am a Christian because...

- Christianity is _____

_____ (NKJV)

Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

_____ (NKJV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

_____ (ESV)

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God..."

- I'm a Christian because Christianity's _____ **and...** there are good reasons & evidence to think it's _____

Apologetics Is...

_____ (ESV)

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a *defense* to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

- Apologia = " _____ "
- We are called to give an apologia (*a defense*) for our _____
- Give reasons for _____ you believe _____ you believe.

_____ (NIV)

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

_____ (NIV)

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask Him, "are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

_____ (NIV)

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."

_____ (NASB)

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas...

Four Key Questions You Must Answer Affirmatively to Come to the *Conclusion* That Christianity Is True:

1. Does truth

_____ and can we know it?

2. Does God _____?
3. Has God _____?
4. Has God _____?

Two Common Objections to Apologetics...

1. Objection #1: No one comes to Christ through _____.

False! Consider Acts 17:2-4.

_____ (NIV)

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

Four Modern Day Examples
of Converted Skeptics...

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Objection #2: It's the
_____ who saves, not us.

"The longer I am in this work, the more I realize that intellectual struggles are merely the hazardous waste of life, blocking the heart from truth. The task of apologetics is to carefully remove that hazardous material and keep it from igniting into a destructive fire. Once that is done, the way to the heart is always through the way of the cross, God's love for each and every one of us."

Ravi Zacharias / Apologist

Where's the Room for Faith?

_____ (NIV)

Now faith is being sure of
what we hope for and
certain of what we do not
see.

Faith = _____

- ... in what you have good
reasons to believe is

Session One Review

Test yourself on what you retained from Session One. Once you've completed this review, grade yourself. Answers are found in your session outline. *Grade = __ / 5*

Fill-in-the-Blank....

1. What should your primary response be when asked the question, "Why are you a Christian?"
 - I am a Christian because Christianity is _____ and there are good reasons and evidence to think it's _____!
2. What Bible verses could you reference to give biblical backing to the importance of truth to the Christian faith?
 - _____; _____; _____
3. Apologia = " _____ "
4. What are the four key questions you must answer affirmatively to make the cumulative case that Christianity is true?
 - Does Truth _____ and can we know it?
 - Does God _____?
 - Has God _____?
 - Has God _____?

5. What are two of the more common objections to apologetics?

- No one comes to Christ through _____.
- It's the _____ who saves, not us.

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Session One Discussion

With your team, take time to discuss the content of this session.

1. What has been your usual response to the question, "Why are you a Christian?", and do you think others found your reasons persuasive and compelling?
2. Does it really matter if our religious beliefs are false? Why or why not?
3. Can evidence persuade someone to become a Christian? Is your answer consistent with Acts 17:1-4 and I Peter 3:15?
4. What one question do you have after today's teaching?
5. How much time might it take a non-Christian to carefully examine the truth claims and evidence for Christianity? How long are you willing to walk with someone on that journey?

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Session Two

Truth Never Gets Old

"The right approach to life is one that hungers to know as many truths as one can and to avoid as many falsehoods as possible."

J.P. Moreland

Session Two Outline

Our Culture's View of Truth...

*"What I know for sure is that speaking **your truth** is the most powerful tool we have."* (emphasis ours)

Oprah Winfrey | Author

Relativism

rel-a-ti-vis-m

- There are no _____, rather all truths are relative to a culture or an individual.

Truth Claims About Ice Cream

1. Reese's Peanut Butter Cup ice cream is _____
2. Reese's Peanut Butter Cup ice cream is a medicine that _____

Two Kinds of Truth...

- _____ truth
- _____ truth
- Subjective truths are _____
- Objective truths are _____

Objective or Subjective?

Place an *O* next to each objective claim, and an *S* next to each subjective claim.

- 1. That guy's shirt's red. ____
- 2. Red is the best color. ____
- 3. Two plus two equals four. ____
- 4. Tropical island vacations are the best. ____
- 5. Brett can bench press 350 pounds. ____
- 6. Atoms consist of protons, neutrons, and electrons. ____
- 7. God exists. ____
- 8. Jesus is the only way to God & Orthodox Jews are wrong. ____
- 9. Premarital sex is morally wrong. ____
- 10. It is wrong for women to have an elective abortion. ____

Consequences of Relativism...

1. Consequence #1: Relativism undermines _____ & the _____

"It is after you have realized that there is a moral law and a power behind that law, and that you have broken the law and put yourself wrong with that power – it is after this and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk."

C.S. Lewis | Apologist

2. Consequence #2: Relativism undermines the _____ of the _____

The Mission of the Church is...

_____ (NIV)

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Two Major Problems with Relativism...

1. Relativism is _____
2. Relativism doesn't _____ with our _____ of reality

- Relativism & subjectivism are

_____ - _____

Self-defeating claims

- *All English sentences are false.*
- *No sentences are longer than six words.*
- *All bachelors love their wives.*
- *My brother's an only child.*
- *That place is so crowded no one goes there anymore.*
- *You should not tell people they are wrong.*
- *I don't believe anything not proven scientifically.*
- *There is no truth.*
- *All truth is relative.*
- *Truth is unknowable.*
- *Nobody has the truth.*

**Correspondence Theory
of Truth**

- Our beliefs are true if they match up with _____

"If you say that it is and it is, or you say that it isn't and it isn't, that's true. If you say that it isn't and it is, or you say that it is and it isn't, that's false."

Aristotle / Greek Philosopher

The Biblical View of Truth

- _____: Hebrew for truth. *faithfulness and conformity to fact.*
- _____: Greek for truth. *that which is conformed to reality.*

In Summary

- If something is _____, it is the truth about reality.
- Christianity is the _____.

If Christianity is not true should you believe it? No! Paul says...

_____ (NIV)

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead. But He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people to be pitied.

"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

C.S. Lewis / Apologist

_____ (NIV)

I am the way and the truth and
the life. No one comes to the
Father except through me.

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Session Two Review

Test yourself on what you retained from Session Two. Once you've completed this review, grade yourself. Answers are found in your Session Two outline. *Grade = __ / 5*

Fill-in-the-Blank...

1. Complete the definition of relativism below.
 - There are no _____ truths, rather all truths are _____ to a culture or an individual.
2. List the two types of truths.
 - _____ truth
 - _____ truth
3. What are moral relativism's three fatal flaws?
 - Relativism is _____
 - Relativism doesn't _____ with our _____ of reality
 - Relativism is _____ - _____
4. Give one example of a subjective statement.
 - _____.
5. Give one example of an objective statement.
 - _____.

Session Two Discussion

With your team, take time to discuss the content of this session.

1. Define moral relativism. Do you understand what it is?
2. Why do so many people buy into the idea of moral relativism?
3. Are things like rape, racism, or slavery obvious moral wrongs *to most people*? Why or why not?
4. What are the differences between knowing there *are* true objective moral views and knowing *which* moral views are the right ones?
5. Is it possible for a moral rule to exist, even if no one recognizes it as a moral rule? In other words, if no one believed it was wrong to kill innocent people for no reason, would it still be wrong to do so? Why or why not?

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Session Three

God, Are You Out There?

"God has provided enough evidence in this life to convince anyone willing to believe, yet he has also left some ambiguity so as not to compel the unwilling."

Norman L. Geisler

Session Three Outline

Is God Like Santa Claus...?

"The kindly God who lovingly fashioned each and every one of us and sprinkled the sky with shining stars for our delight – that God is, like Santa Claus, a myth of childhood, not anything a sane, undeluded adult could literally believe in."

Daniel Dennett | Atheist

Does God Exist...?

- _____ Exists
- We have enough evidence beyond a _____ that God exists.

_____ (NIV)

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

- _____ truths

Obvious Truth #1

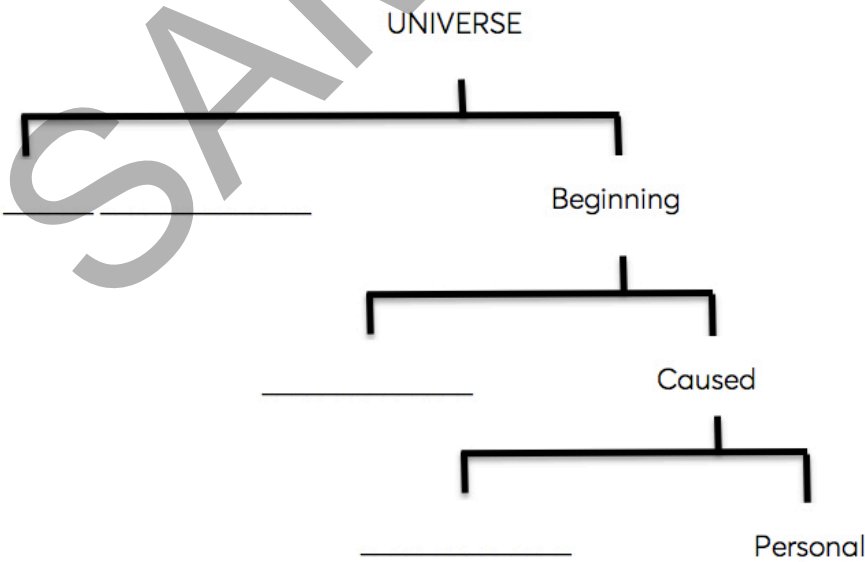
1. The universe _____

The Formal Structure of the Kalam Cosmological Argument

- Premise 1: Whatever begins to exist

- Premise 2: The universe began to _____
- Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a

Graph 1: The Argument Put into a Series of Dilemmas



Three Reasons Why the Universe Might Have a Beginning...

- Reason #1 (Philosophical): It is impossible to complete an _____ of past events.

Graph 2: A Timeline, Where Each Dot Represents an Event in Time

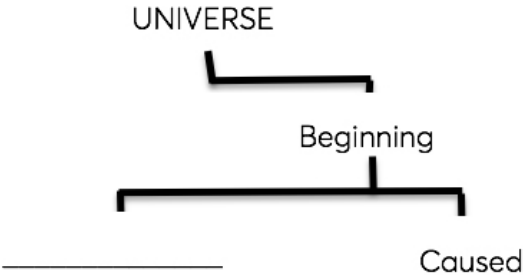


- Reason #2 (Scientific): The _____ (NIV)

By the word of the Lord the Heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

- Reason #3: The 2nd law of _____

Graph 1 Cont.



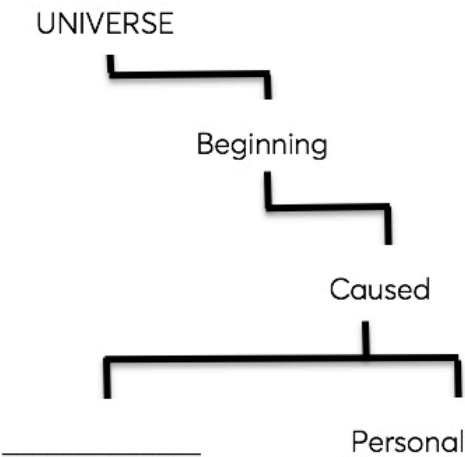
"Suppose you suddenly hear a loud bang... and you ask me, 'what made that bang?' and I reply, 'nothing, it just happened.' You would not accept that."

Kai Nielsen | Atheist Philosopher

*"What does need its origin explained is the concrete universe itself... [It] does perform a version of the ultimate bootstrapping trick; it creates itself **ex nihilo**. Or at any rate out of something that is well-nigh indistinguishable from nothing at all."*

Daniel Dennett | Atheist

Graph 1 Cont.



Causation | How Things Are Caused

- By an _____
- By a personal _____

Whatever brought the universe into existence has to be...

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The Arguments Conclusion

- _____ exists

One Common Objection...

- Who made _____?

Obvious Truth #2

- 2. It is wrong to torture young children just for _____

_____ (NASB)

For when Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...

The Formal Argument

- Premise 1: If objective moral values exist, then _____
- Premise 2: Objective moral values _____
- Conclusion: Therefore, God _____

True or False?

Place *T* next to true claims, and *F* next to a false claims.

- Killing innocent people for no reason is wrong. _____
- Raping women is morally good. _____

- We should practice racism daily. _____
- You should beat your siblings often. _____

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed to be cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"

C.S. Lewis | Apologist

"A duty is something that is owed... but something can be owed only to some person or persons. There can be no such thing as a duty in isolation... the concept of moral obligation [is] unintelligible apart from the idea of God."

Richard Taylor | Skeptic & Philosopher

The Conclusion to the Argument

- There is a _____

Obvious Truth #3

3. There is evil in the _____

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: Jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

Richard Dawkins | Atheist

"In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference."

Richard Dawkins | Atheist

Three-Step Argument of Evil

- 1. Evil is a departure from the way things _____

- 2. The way things ought to be implies an _____

- 3. An objective moral law implies a _____

The conclusion to the moral argument

- *There Is a Moral Law GIVER!*

Other Arguments for God's Existence

- The _____ argument
- The _____ argument

- The argument from _____
- The argument from _____
- The _____ argument
- The argument from _____

The Session 3 Conclusion ...

- It is most reasonable to believe there is a _____

If There Is No God, Then...

- There is no _____
- There is no _____ meaning

_____ (NIV)

The wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness...

_____ (NIV)

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Session Three Review

Test yourself on what you retained from Session Three. Once you've completed this review, grade yourself. Answers are found in your Session Three outline. *Grade = ____ / 5*

Fill-in-the-Blank...

1. List the three obvious truths discussed in Session Three.
 - Obvious Truth #1: The _____ exists.
 - Obvious Truth #2: It's wrong to _____ young _____ for _____.
 - Obvious Truth #3: There is _____ in the world.
2. Complete the Kalam Cosmological Argument.
 - Premise 1: Whatever begins to exist has a _____.
 - Premise 2: The universe began to _____.
 - Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a _____.
3. Evil is a departure from the way things _____ to _____.
4. The way things ought to be implies an _____ moral law.
5. An _____ moral law implies a moral law _____.

Session Three Discussion

Discuss with your team the material you just reviewed.

1. Is there value in leading someone to believe in God even if they do not immediately accept Christianity? Why or why not?
2. What are the implications of an atheistic universe versus the implications of a theistic universe?
3. Explain the cosmological argument for God's existence? What parts do you find confusing?
4. Why might the Christian argue that life without God is ultimately absurd? Do you find this line of argument compelling? Why or why not?
5. Do you believe that God exists? Why or why not?

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Session Four

Why Should I Trust the Bible?

"If skeptics were willing to give the Gospels the same benefit of the doubt they are willing to give other ancient documents, the Gospels would easily pass the test of authorship."

J. Warner Wallace

Session Four Outline

**Three Important Questions
We Need to Answer About
the Bible...**

- 1. Transmission: Is what we have what they _____?
- 2. Historicity: Are the things written what really _____?
- 3. Inspiration: Is what they wrote what God actually _____?

**1. Transmission: Is What We
Have What They Wrote?**

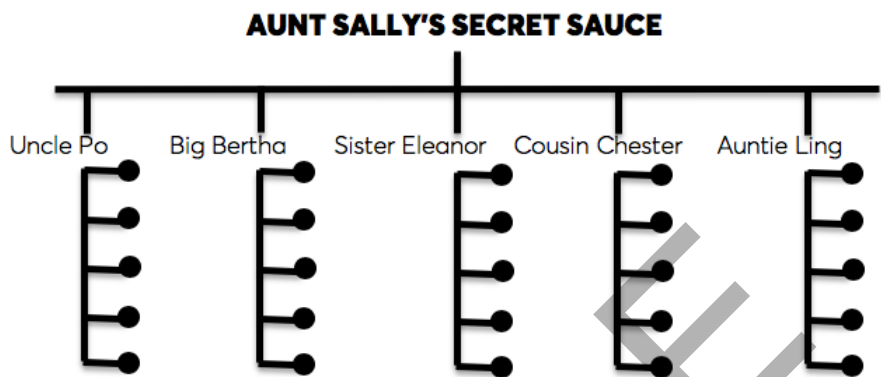
"Not only do we not have the originals, we don't have the first copies of the originals. We don't even have the copies of the copies of the originals, or copies of the copies of the copies of the originals. What we have are copies made later – much later. In most instances, they are copies made many centuries later. And these copies all differ from one another, in many thousands of places. There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words of the New Testament."

Bart Ehrman | Skeptic

You have...

- _____ words in the New Testament
- _____ to _____ variances

Analogy: How Aunt Sally's Recipe Gets Passed Along



Three questions scholars ask about the manuscripts they have, helping them determine how reliable the copy of the original is...

1. How _____ manuscripts do we have?
 2. How _____ are the manuscripts we have?
 3. How _____ are the textual variations?
-
1. How many manuscripts do we have?
 - More than _____ Greek manuscripts

- More than _____ pages of text

Graph 4: Amount of Handwritten NT Manuscripts

10,000+ Latin manuscripts
8,000 Coptic, Syriac, Gothic, and Arabic manuscripts
+ 5,800 Handwritten manuscripts
23,800+ Handwritten Manuscripts of the New Testament

- More than _____
quotations of the New
Testament by early Church
fathers
2. How early are the
manuscripts we have?

Graph 5: Total early New Testament manuscripts

12 Second Century
64 Third Century
+ 48 Fourth Century
124 Manuscripts Within First 300 Years of NT Writings

- Other Ancient Documents**
- Livy has _____ copies
& the earliest copy is
_____ years after the
original

- Tacitus has _____
copies & the earliest
copy is _____ years
after the original
- Suetonius has _____
copies & the earliest
copy is _____ years
after the original

**Compare Ancient
Manuscripts to the New
Testament**

- _____ NT copies
 - We have copies as early
as _____ years after
originals
 - _____ Within 1st 300
years
3. How significant are the
textual variations?
- _____ % of the
variations are what
scholars call insignificant
variations

Find the Variations

Circle the variations in Aunt Sally's recipe. How many?

- 1. Add 1 cop of finely chopped garlic, and boil.
- 2. Add 1 cup of finely chipped garlic, and boil.
- 3. Ad 1 cup of finely chopped garlic, and boil.
- 4. Add 1 cup of finely chopped garlic, and bowl.
- 5. Add 1 cup of finely chopped glaric, and boil.
- 6. Add 1 cup # finely chopped garlic, and boil.
- 7. Add 1 cup of finely chopped garlic, nd boil.
- 8. Add 1 cup of fly chopped garlic, and boil.

The BIG Three...

- _____
- _____
- _____

"Most of the changes found in our early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology. Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes, pure and simple slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled words, blunders of one sort or another."

Bart Ehrman | Skeptic

Transmission Conclusion...

- What we are reading today is _____
_____ 2,000 years ago

2. Historicity: Are the Things Written What Really Happened?

When it comes to the questions of historicity we want to apply two tests.

- _____ tests

- _____ tests

Internal Tests

- The principle of _____

- The test of _____

- NT writers are _____

early sources

External Tests

- Matthew 26:3 ...Whose name was _____...

- Luke 3:2 ...During the high priesthood of Annas and _____...

- John 18:13 ... for He was Father-In-Law of _____

Caiaphas Ossuary

- Discovered in December of _____
- Inscribed on the ossuary were the words "Yehosef Bar Kayafa," translated as "Joseph, Son of Caiaphas"

Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered in _____

Historicity Conclusion...

- We Have an Accurate _____ Book

3. Inspiration: Is What They Wrote What God Actually Said?

Supernatural Predictions...

Example: Micah 5:2 Predicts the City Jesus Would Be Born In 700 Years Before His Actual Birth

- Be a descendant of Abraham _____
(Genesis 12:1-3) _____
- Be from the tribe of Judah _____
(Genesis 49:10) _____
- And the house of David _____
(Psalm 110:1) _____
- Be born of a Virgin _____
(Isaiah 7:14) _____
- Be betrayed for 30 silver pieces _____
(Zechariah 11:12) _____
- Have his hands & feet pierced _____
(Psalm 22:16) _____
- Be crucified with transgressors _____
(Isaiah 53:9,12) _____
- Cry out, "my God, my God, ... _____"
(Psalm 22:1) _____
- Rise from the dead _____
(Psalm 16:8-11) _____

- Ascend into Heaven
_____ (Ps 68:1-8)

Supernatural Unity

- _____ different authors
- Over _____ years
- In _____ different countries
- On _____ different continents

The Bible Also Has...

- Supernatural _____
- Supernatural _____
- Supernatural _____

Inspiration Conclusion...

The Bible is _____ the
_____ of _____

**If We Have Good Reason to
Think We Are Holding in
Our Hands the Very Words
of God, Then Our Response
Should Be...**

- _____
- _____
- Reading the

- Discovering what's In
the _____
- Finding out what God
has
said to us
- Becoming
_____ about the Bible!

_____ (NIV)

For, "All people are like
grass, and all their glory is
like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the
flowers fall, but the word of
the Lord stands forever."

Session Four Review

Test yourself on what you retained from Session Four. Once you've completed this review, grade yourself. Answers are found in your Session Four outline. *Grade = ____ / 5*

Fill-in-the-Blank....

1. When it comes to establishing the authority of the Bible, what are the three key questions we must ask and answer?
 - _____: Is what we have what they wrote?
 - _____: Are the things written what really happened?
 - _____: Is what they wrote what God actually said?
2. When it comes to the transmission of the biblical manuscripts, what are the three important questions scholars ask as they try to reconstruct the original?
 - How _____ manuscripts do we have?
 - How _____ are the manuscripts we have?
 - How _____ are the textual variations?
3. When it comes to the historicity of the Bible, what are the two important tests we must conduct?
 - _____ Test
 - _____ Test

4. Name two of the ten fulfilled prophecies we learned about in Session Four.

○ Prophecy 1: _____

○ Prophecy 2: _____

5. What is one way the Bible is supernatural?

• Supernatural _____

Session Four Discussion

With your team, take time to discuss the content of this session.

1. Why is the telephone analogy a bad analogy to describe the way the Bible has been passed down through time?
2. What's the difference between translation and transmission of the Bible?
3. Explain the difference between the internal and external tests for the historical reliability of the Bible.
4. What are the two or three most compelling reasons for you to think the Bible is no mere book but inspired by God?
5. What clarifications do you need from Session Four?

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Session Five

Only One Way

"So, Jesus is a man. That is the first thing. But there is something more. From the beginning Jesus says things no man is allowed to say, at least not a Jew speaking to other Jews. He says he existed before he was born. He says any sin he pardons is forgiven, as if he is the one any sin has wronged. He says honor due the Father is due him. He says final judgment in the final day falls to him. He says he is drink for the thirsty and bread for the hungry, so they will never thirst or hunger again. He says those who trust in him will live, even if they die."

Gregory Koukl

Session Five Outline

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus of Nazareth

Cultural Messages...

- We ought to _____
- _____ is the key to coexisting

Pluralism = All religions are equally true & valid paths to God

An Unpopular Message...

- _____: Only one true religion leads to God

A study published in *Soul Searching: The Religious & Spiritual Life* about American teenagers revealed...

- _____% of conservative Protestant teens affirm there is only one religion that is true
- _____% of mainline Protestant teens affirm there is only one religion that is true

**Objections to the Exclusive
Claims of Jesus**

1. Objection #1: I Am

One should respond by asking...

- Why are you _____?

The mature one asks...

- What is _____?

_____ (ESV)

...A Stone of Stumbling, and
a Rock of Offense.

2. Objection #2: How can
Christianity be the only
_____?

This Objection commits a
logical fallacy...

- _____: There are many
religions in the world
- _____: There
cannot be only one true
religion

- This is called a _____ - _____

3. Objection #3: Aren't all Religions _____?
_____?

- Why can't we focus on the _____, not the _____?

4. Objection #4: What about people who are _____?
_____?

- Sincerity is not _____

5. Obstacle #5: If you were born in Saudi Arabia, you would _____

This obstacle commits the genetic fallacy

- You can't dismiss a _____ based upon where it _____

6. Obstacle #6: Exclusive religious views are the cause of _____

Encyclopedia of Wars

5 Millennia of Wars – by Charles Phillips & Alan Axelrod

• _____ total wars listed

• Only _____ of those wars have religion as their cause

• Remove _____ due to Islam

• Less than _____% caused by religion, and about _____% if you take out Islam

7. Objection #7: You Christians are so

_____ - _____

This objection is an...

• _____ :
Latin for "*Against the Man*"

The Point Is...

• Truth is _____ by definition

Once we remove the objections, we are ready to look at Jesus. Key question:

- What do the _____
_____ tell us about Jesus?

Four Key Questions We Must Answer to Make the Case that Christianity is True...

1. Does truth exist and is it _____?
2. Does God _____?
3. Does God _____?
4. Does God _____?

What Does the Bible Tell Us About Jesus?

_____ (NIV)

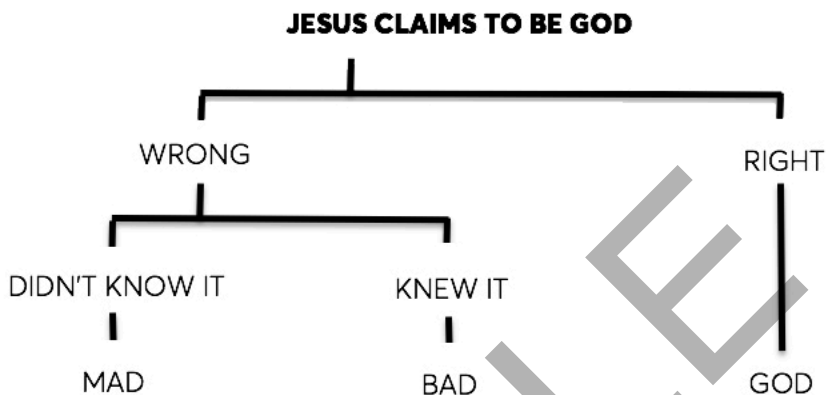
"...Who do people say I am?"

JESUS CLAIMS TO BE GOD!

_____ (NIV)

I and the Father are One.

Graph 6: Jesus Claims to be God



"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic...or else he would be the devil in hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit on him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

C.S. Lewis | Apologist

Minimal Facts About Jesus...

(See "The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus" by Habermas and Licona)

- 1. Fact #1: Jesus died by _____
- 2. Fact #2: The disciples believed Jesus rose from the _____
- 3. Fact #3: Paul, the church persecutor, was _____
- 4. Fact #4: James, the skeptic, _____
- 5. Fact #5: The tomb was _____

The Best Explanation...

- Jesus rose from the _____

Why is Jesus the only way?

_____ (NIV)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

_____ (NASB)

And this is the judgment,
that the light has come into
the world, and men loved
the darkness rather than
the light for their deeds
were evil.

Christians will be hated...

_____ (NIV)

If the world hates you, keep
in mind that it hated me
first. If you belonged to the
world, it would love you as
its own. As it is, you do not
belong to the world, but I
have chosen you out of the
world. That is why the world
hates you. Remember what
I told you; "A servant is not
greater than his master." If
they persecuted me, they
will persecute you also.

_____ (NIV)

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood..."

_____ (NIV)

They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

SAMPLE

Session Five Review

Test yourself on what you retained from Session Five. Once you've completed this review, grade yourself. Answers are found in your Session Five outline. *Grade = ____ / 5*

Fill-in-the-Blank...

1. ____: All religions are equally true and valid paths to God.
2. ____: Only one true religion leads to God.

True or False?

3. ____: Christianity is unique in making exclusive religious claims.
4. ____: All religions teach essentially the same principles.
5. ____: Jesus could have been a good moral teacher, but not God.

Session Five Discussion

With your team, take time to discuss the content of this session.

1. Do you believe that Jesus is the only way to God? Why?
2. Does it really matter if our religious beliefs are false?
3. What objections have you heard people raise against the idea that Jesus is the only way? How would you respond?
4. How are Jesus' claims different from the claims of other religious leaders?
5. Why are people resistant to the claim Jesus is the only way?

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Session Six

The Allure of Good Questions

"If I have only an hour with someone, I will spend the first 55 minutes asking questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then the last 5 minutes I will share something of the truth."

Francis Schaeffer

Session Six Outline

The Great Commission

_____ (NASB)

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

_____ (NASB)

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Phrases Christians Use...

- You have to get non-Christians to the _____
- Close the _____ with unbelievers
- Preach the _____
- Lead people to _____

Starting with Questions Does Two Good Things...

- 1. You _____ the other person
- 2. It takes the _____ off you

Two Key Questions You Must Learn to Ask...

Question #1...

- 1. What do you _____?
- Purpose: To get _____

Common Objections Your Skeptical Friend May Raise...

- There is no _____!
- Christians are _____!
- God cannot exist when there is so much _____ in the world!
- We believe in _____ too!

Question #2...

2. How did you come to
that _____?

- Purpose: Reverse the
_____ of

**Common Objections
Christians May Hear...**

- All religions are
_____ the _____
- Religion is the _____ of

- The Bible is full of

Possible Question #3...

3. Have you ever thought
about _____...?

_____ (ESV)

...Always being prepared to
make a defense to anyone
who asks you for a reason
for the hope that is in you;
yet do it with gentleness
and respect...

The Goal...

- The goal is not to win _____ but to win _____ to _____

_____ (NIV)

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...

***Get Off the Sidelines.
Live Your Life on Mission for Jesus.***

SAMPLE

Session Six Review

Test yourself on what you retained from Session Six. Once you've completed this review, grade yourself. Answers are found in your Session Six outline. *Grade = ____ / 5*

Fill-in-the-Blank...

1. The conversational goal is to put a " _____ in a person's shoe."
2. By asking good questions you will _____ the other person, while taking the _____ off of you.
3. Question #1: _____ do you _____?
4. Question #2: How did you _____ to that _____?
5. Question #3: Have you ever _____ about _____...?

Session Six Discussion

With your team, take time to discuss the content of this session.

1. What's a reasonable goal for each **conversation** we have with non-Christians? How does this differ from the goal we may have for the person?
2. What are the possible benefits when you start with questions rather than statements in a conversation with a non-Christian?
3. What's the purpose of question number one?
4. What is the second question? What is its purpose?
5. What is holding you back from talking to your friends about Christ? How might the questions help you?

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

MAVEN

SAMPLE

SECTION TWO

REQUIRED READING

I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FAITH TO BE AN ATHEIST by Norman L. Geisler & Frank Turek

To prepare for your Immersive Experience you are required to read I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FAITH TO BE AN ATHEIST (IDHEFTBA) by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, as well as take a series of quizzes after each section of reading.

As you read, write notes in the margin, underline and use a highlighter to make it easier to go back and study for each quiz. Don't read just to fulfill the requirement but read to grow in your knowledge!

In Section Two you'll find the following tools to help you:

- **Reading Plan:** Use the reading plan to help you gauge what you need to read before each quiz. Do not save reading until the last minute. Cramming won't work!
- **Suggested Readings:** It's important you keep learning. Consider going through the other suggested readings in this section as additional study tools.
- **Reading Quizzes:** After you read the appropriate chapters, you will then take the quiz assigned to that reading plan. All quizzes are taken from the Official Study Guide to IDHEFTBA by Norman Geisler and Jason Jimenez.

Enjoy your reading. Schedule when you'll read and make sure you're not just reading because you were told to!

Reading Plan

I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FAITH TO BE AN ATHEIST by Norman L. Geisler & Frank Turek

Due By...

Chapters

Quiz 1	Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2
Quiz 2	Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5
Quiz 3	Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Chapter 8
Quiz 4	Chapter 9, Chapter 10, Chapter 11
Quiz 5	Chapter 12, Chapter 13, Chapter 14, Conclusion

Preparedness: You will be taking quizzes on each section of reading assigned. You must bring your required readings, your guidebook, and be on time for the quizzes. If you forget your book, your guidebook, or are late for a quiz, points will be deducted.

*"Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest."
Book of Common Prayer*

Suggested Readings

Here are some additional readings, which are highly encouraged, but not mandatory, to read as you prepare for your Apologetics Immersive Experience.

Books

1. Tactics by Gregory Koukl
2. Is God a Human Invention? by Sean McDowell & Jonathan Morrow

SAMPLE

Reading Quizzes

Test Yourself. How Well Have You Read & Studied?

Reading Quiz #1

Now that you've read the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 of IDHEFTBA, go through this quiz as a study guide first. Feel free to make a copy on another sheet of paper for practice but wait to officially take this quiz until your leader gives permission.

1. How would you respond to, "All religions are true"?

2. How do you know what you believe is true?

3. Define the worldviews and list the appropriate religions under each one. (pgs. 22-23)

Theism:

Pantheism:

Atheism:

4. Write down the definition of truth stated by the authors. (pg. 36)

5. What is a self-defeating statement? (pgs. 38-39)

6. What's the difference between truth and tolerance? (pgs. 46-48)

7. What is the role on an apologist? (pg. 53)

8. Define this principle *Law of Noncontradiction*. (pgs. 56-57)

9. Can the Road Runner Tactic prove that God exists or that Christianity is true? Why or why not? (pg. 62)

10. How is truth known? (pgs. 62-65)

Quiz #1 Grading Rubric

Grading is done on the honor system so please be 100% honest as you fill out your grading rubric.

1. **Did You Read:** If you read the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 in its entirety, not just some of it, then give yourself 50 points. There are no partial points here – you either get 50 or 0. Reading 99% doesn't get you there.
 - Points = _____
2. **Questions Correct:** Every question you got right give yourself 5 points. There are 50 points available here.
 - Points = _____
3. **Preparedness:** If you forgot your book subtract 10 points. If you forgot your guidebook subtract 10 points. If you were late for this quiz take away 1 point for each minute late. Add up how many total points you need to subtract.
 - Points = - _____
4. **Your Grade** = Total your points from number 1 and number 2, subtract any points from number 3, and put your final score below.
 - Total Points = _____ / 100
 - Grade = _____%

If you received a 70% or above, you pass! If you did not, please schedule a makeup date with your leader.

Reading Quiz #2

Now that you've read Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of IDHEFTBA, go through this quiz as a study guide first. Feel free to make a copy on another sheet of paper for practice but wait to officially take this quiz until your leader gives permission.

1. What's so important about Einstein's discovery of General Relativity? (pgs. 73-74)

2. What are proofs in support of General Relativity? (pgs. 73-76)

3. What is the Cosmological Argument? (pgs.74-76)

4. List the five lines of evidence that have been discovered which show that the universe had a beginning. (pgs. 76-84)

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

5. Summarize the definition offered by Arthur Eddington of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. (pg. 78)

6. How would you respond to someone who asks you, "Who made God?" (pgs. 92-93)

7. What does the Teleological Argument mean and why is it important to know? (pg. 95)

8. State the Principle of Uniformity. (pg. 117)

9. Name two types of causes and give examples of each. (pg. 120)

10. List five reasons materialism isn't reasonable. (pgs. 128-129)

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

Quiz #2 Grading Rubric

Grading is done on the honor system so please be 100% honest as you fill out your grading rubric.

1. **Did You Read:** If you read the Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in its entirety, not just some of it, then give yourself 50 points. There are no partial points here – you either get 50 or 0. Reading 99% doesn't get you there.
 - Points = _____
2. **Questions Correct:** Every question you got right give yourself 5 points. There are 50 points available here.
 - Points = _____
3. **Preparedness:** If you forgot your book subtract 10 points. If you forgot your guidebook subtract 10 points. If you were late for this quiz take away 1 point for each minute late. Add up how many total points you need to subtract.
 - Points = - _____
4. **Your Grade** = Total your points from number 1 and number 2, subtract any points from number 3, and put your final score below.
 - Total Points = _____ / 100
 - Grade = _____%

If you received a 70% or above, you pass! If you did not, please schedule a makeup date with your leader.

Reading Quiz #3

Now that you've read Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of IDHEFTBA, go through this quiz as a study guide first. Feel free to make a copy on another sheet of paper for practice but wait to officially take this quiz until your leader gives permission.

1. Define macroevolution. (pg. 140)

2. Respond to the objection *Intelligent Design is not science*. (pg. 156)

3. If the evidence is so strong for Intelligent Design, then why are there still Darwinists? (pgs. 161-165)

4. Explain why the Moral Law is undeniable. (pgs. 172-173)

5. Explain why there are no human rights without Moral Law. (pgs. 175-176)

6. In your own words, explain how we couldn't know justice or injustice without the Moral Law. (pgs. 176-177)

7. In your own words, explain how there are no real moral grounds for political or social dissent without the Moral Law. (pgs. 180-191)

8. How would you respond to a relativist who says that the fact that different cultures have different practices means they have different values as well? (pg. 185)

9. How would you respond to a relativist who says moral disagreements or differences of opinions (i.e., abortion) prove morality to be relative? (pgs. 184-185)

10. Why don't we see biblical miracles today? (pgs. 215-216)

Quiz #3 Grading Rubric

Grading is done on the honor system so please be 100% honest as you fill out your grading rubric.

1. **Did You Read:** If you read the Chapters 6, 7, and 8 in its entirety, not just some of it, then give yourself 50 points. There are no partial points here – you either get 50 or 0. Reading 99% doesn't get you there.
 - Points = _____
5. **Questions Correct:** Every question you got right give yourself 5 points. There are 50 points available here.
 - Points = _____
6. **Preparedness:** If you forgot your book subtract 10 points. If you forgot your guidebook subtract 10 points. If you were late for this quiz take away 1 point for each minute late. Add up how many total points you need to subtract.
 - Points = - _____
7. **Your Grade** = Total your points from number 1 and number 2, subtract any points from number 3, and put your final score below.
 - Total Points = _____ / 100
 - Grade = _____%

If you received a 70% or above, you pass! If you did not, please schedule a makeup date with your leader.

Reading Quiz #4

Now that you've read Chapters 9, 10, and 11 of IDHEFTBA, go through this quiz as a study guide first. Feel free to make a copy on another sheet of paper for practice but wait to officially take this quiz until your leader gives permission.

1. Why is the game "Telephone" a bad illustration to explain the transmission of the New Testament? (pg. 224)

2. How do we know we have accurate copies of the New Testament? (pgs. 225-228)

3. How would you respond to the objection that the New Testament isn't reliable because the New Testament documents contain miracles? (pg. 233)

4. How would you refute the objection that the New Testament isn't reliable because the New Testament writers were biased? (pgs. 233-234)

5. How would you refute the objection that the New Testament isn't reliable because history can't be known? (pgs. 231-232)

6. How would you respond to a skeptic who asks, "If Jesus actually did rise from the dead, shouldn't there be more written about him than there is?" (pgs. 247-248)

7. Provide some evidentiary facts that demonstrate the Gospel of Luke to be a trusted document in what it records. (pgs. 261-262)

8. What are some of the historical crosshairs that the New Testament writers put into their accounts and what significance do they have in confirming their messages? (pgs. 269-271)

9. List one of the ten reasons we know the New Testament writers told the truth. (pg. 297)

10. Explain how including more than 30 historically confirmed people in their writings implies that what the writers wrote is probably true. (pgs. 283-284)

Quiz #4 Grading Rubric

Grading is done on the honor system so please be 100% honest as you fill out your grading rubric.

1. **Did You Read:** If you read the Chapters 9, 10, and 11 in its entirety, not just some of it, then give yourself 50 points. There are no partial points here – you either get 50 or 0. Reading 99% doesn't get you there.
 - Points = _____
8. **Questions Correct:** Every question you got right give yourself 5 points. There are 50 points available here.
 - Points = _____
9. **Preparedness:** If you forgot your book subtract 10 points. If you forgot your guidebook subtract 10 points. If you were late for this quiz take away 1 point for each minute late. Add up how many total points you need to subtract.
 - Points = - _____
10. **Your Grade** = Total your points from number 1 and number 2, subtract any points from number 3, and put your final score below.
 - Total Points = _____ / 100
 - Grade = _____%

If you received a 70% or above, you pass! If you did not, please schedule a makeup date with your leader.

Reading Quiz #5

Now that you've read Chapters 12, 13, 14, and the Conclusion of IDHEFTBA, go through this quiz as a study guide first. Feel free to make a copy on another sheet of paper for practice but wait to officially take this quiz until your leader gives permission.

1. What's the "hallucination theory"? Why's it a false account to Jesus' death and resurrection? (pgs. 301-302)

2. What's the "wrong tomb theory"? Why's it a false reason to Jesus' death and resurrection? (pgs. 302-304)

3. What is the "substitute crucifixion victim theory" and why is it a false explanation to Jesus' death and resurrection? (pgs. 309-310)

4. Despite the attempts made by skeptics to use their alternative theories to refute Jesus' death and resurrection, what are some strategic ways you can put the burden of proof back on them? (pgs. 313-314)

5. How would you go about responding to a skeptic who says that they need "extraordinary evidence" in order to believe in an extraordinary event like the resurrection? (pgs. 320-322)

6. List two messianic passages and predictions fulfilled by Jesus. (pgs. 334-335)

7. List one New Testament passage claiming Jesus is God. (pg. 340)

8. What are some divine actions of Jesus that prove him to be God? (pgs. 334-335)

9. Respond to this objection: "There is actual proof in the Bible where Jesus indirectly claimed he wasn't God. The first indirect claim was when Jesus said there is no one good but God (Matthew 19:17)." (pgs. 350-352)

10. Explain the Trinity using the triangles from Fig 13.3a & 13.3b. (pgs. 351-353)

Quiz #5 Grading Rubric

Grading is done on the honor system so please be 100% honest as you fill out your grading rubric.

1. **Did You Read:** If you read the Chapters 12, 13, 14, and Conclusion in its entirety, not just some of it, then give yourself 50 points. There are no partial points here – you either get 50 or 0. Reading 99% doesn't get you there.
 - Points = _____
11. **Questions Correct:** Every question you got right give yourself 5 points. There are 50 points available here.
 - Points = _____
12. **Preparedness:** If you forgot your book subtract 10 points. If you forgot your guidebook subtract 10 points. If you were late for this quiz take away 1 point for each minute late. Add up how many total points you need to subtract.
 - Points = - _____
13. **Your Grade** = Total your points from number 1 and number 2, subtract any points from number 3, and put your final score below.
 - Total Points = _____ / 100
 - Grade = _____%

If you received a 70% or above, you pass! If you did not, please schedule a makeup date with your leader.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

SAMPLE



MAVEN®

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SECTION THREE

TRIP JOURNAL

PROCESSING THE TRIP

Congratulations! Your Apologetics Immersive Experience has begun. You've read at least one big book, taken five quizzes, which you got a 70% or higher on, and have taken great notes on six teaching sessions. Wow! You have prepared well. You have worked hard, and now's the time to see your work pay off. Don't forget, you won't remember everything. It's alright to say you don't know or to pull out this guidebook to review. That's why you have it. Use it on the trip.

This section is to give you space to process your days with God and your team. Processing is important. You will be given space each night to debrief the day. You'll do this alone and then share it as a team to end your night.

- **Morning Time with God:** Start each morning with God by engaging in His word.
- **Daily Reflection:** Use the reflection pages to process the day's activities, people, main takeaways, and feelings. Don't miss one of the most significant parts of each day – processing it with God, yourself, and others. Each day has much to offer.
- **Evening Prayer:** Prayer is important. End each evening in prayer. Engage in a variety of creative prayer practices throughout this section to foster intimacy with God.

SAMPLE

Day One

Where Are You?

SAMPLE

Where Are You?

As you are entering into this trip, where are you? What distractions are you bringing into this experience? What hopes do you have as you head into an incredible trip? What are you afraid of while on the Apologetics Immersive Experience? We need to know where we are in order to move forward.

DISTRACTIONS...

What distractions are you bringing into this Apologetics Immersive Experience?

NEEDS...

What do you need to receive during this Apologetics Immersive Experience?

HOPES...

What do you hope to get out of your Apologetics Immersive Experience?

FEARS...

What are you nervous about, as you head into this Apologetics Immersive Experience?

[illegible]

Opening Prayer

This is a time to express yourself (spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically) to God.

Prayer of Petition

The week has begun. You just processed through your distractions, needs, hopes and fears for the week. Now lift these up as a request to God. What do you need from Him this week? Ask for these things.

Lord,

Amen.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:6

Daily Reflection

Process your day. It's important. Take time to examine the day's events. Use the questions and evening prayer exercise to help you see how God was working throughout your day.

ACTIVITIES...

What event(s) are sitting with you from today? What event(s) do you want to remember?

Sample

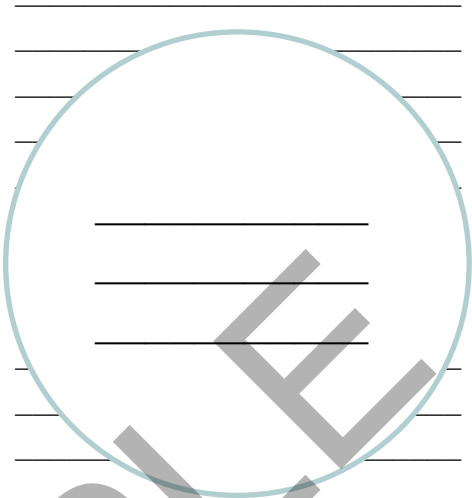
PEOPLE...

Who is someone you met for the first time today? Who are they? What did you like about them?

[illegible]

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

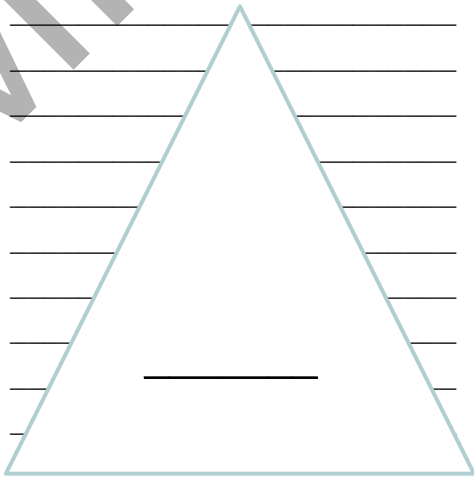
What did you learn today about yourself, God, life, or others, which you'd like to remember? It can be simple or complex.



A large circle with a light blue outline. Inside the circle, there are three horizontal lines for writing. The circle is positioned on a background of horizontal lines.

I FEEL...

What one word would you use to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences? Examples: overwhelmed, frustrated, excited, hopeful, and so on.



A large triangle with a light blue outline. Inside the triangle, there is one horizontal line for writing. The triangle is positioned on a background of horizontal lines.

Evening Prayer

Prayer is one of the most important disciplines in the life of a Christian. It's one way to talk to God. Take time now to use today's prayer exercise to be with the Creator.

Open Hands Prayer

Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes and place your hands out in front of you.

First, place your palms down, which represents a posture of releasing or letting go of. With your palms facing down take a few minutes to pray through the areas of your day you need to let go of and give to God. Release any burdens, frustrations, or distractions from your day. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus encourages us to give him our burdens so we may find rest. Give him your problems from the day. Find rest in Him.

Second, flip your palms over, which represents a posture of receiving. With your palms facing up prayerfully receive from God whatever he has for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

As you enter into today's evening prayer be sure to take it slow. Take deep breaths throughout this prayer. Be with God. Let go of what you need and receive what He has for you.

Journal any thoughts or prayers if needed...

SAMPLE

Day Two

Diving In!

SAMPLE

Morning Time with God

The Sermon on the Mount Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Matthew Chapters 5 - 7.

Journal: Write out your thoughts and reactions about the various things Jesus teaches in these chapters.

Handwriting practice lines for journaling. The page contains 20 horizontal lines. A large, light gray diagonal watermark reading "SAMPLE" is overlaid across the center of the page.

Group Discussion: End your time by discussing with your teammates what you got out of this morning's time with God.

Daily Reflection

Process your day. It's important. Take time now to examine your day. Use the question and evening prayer exercise to help you see how God was working throughout your day.

ACTIVITIES...

What did you do today?

What one activity specifically stood out to you?

Sample

PEOPLE...

Who stood out to you today? Why?

[illegible]

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

What do you want to take away from today? What did you learn that'll be important to remember?

I FEEL...

Use one word to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences.

A large triangle is drawn on a background of horizontal lines. A pencil icon is positioned at the top left. A single horizontal line is drawn across the middle of the triangle, intended for writing the answer.

Evening Prayer

Prayer is one of the most important disciplines in the life of a Christian. It's one way to talk to God. Take time now to use today's prayer exercise to be with the Creator.

Six Word Prayer

Earnest Hemingway introduced the Six Word Memoirs years ago with his famous short story, "For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn."

In six words only, write a prayer to God. Structure your prayer however you'd like.

Lord,

Amen.

SAMPLE

Day Three

Immersing Deeper in the Experience...

Morning Time with God

The Beatitudes Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

At this very moment, many people are suffering from hunger. According to the United Nations, someone in the world today dies of starvation every four seconds.¹ Since the majority of people who lived in the Roman Empire were poor, it is safe to say that most of those who came to hear Jesus teach were poor. And poor people are often hungry. Sometimes Jesus provided food for them, such as when he fed more than 5,000 people on one occasion and more than 4,000 on another.² But Jesus taught that we should hunger for God and to live a holy life even more than for food, because these things are more important than life itself.³

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus fasted for forty days and then said, "Man will not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from God's mouth."⁴ And shortly after He said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied!"⁵

Jesus was tired and hungry after completing one of his journeys. His disciples purchased some food, brought it to him, and urged him to eat. But he said, "I have food to eat that you do not know about. . . My food is to do the will of him who

¹ <http://www.poverty.com>

² Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-14, Matthew 15:29-38, Mark 8:1-9.

³ Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4, Matthew 5:6, 6:33, John 4:13-14, 6:26-35; Matthew 22:36-37, Mark 12:29-30.

⁴ Matthew 4:4; cf. Psalm 63:1; 143:6.

⁵ Matthew 5:6

sent me and to finish his work."⁶ For Jesus, doing the will of his Father and obeying him was more important than the food he needed for strength and survival. The will of his Father was to announce to all that salvation from their sins was available, for he would make that possible through his sacrificial death on a Roman cross. And his resurrection from the dead a few days after guarantees salvation and eternal life to all who come forth from the dark dungeon of their sins and their self and follow him. After His resurrection, Jesus came to the dungeon where we were all confined. The guards ran away in horrific fear. Jesus smiled, the locks on the doors fell off, and the doors swung wide open. He fed us then said, "Come! Follow me! Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."⁷

Jesus is not speaking of physical food. He is speaking of spiritual food, which is far more valuable and important. He offers us eternal life. And now we must thirst for God and be hungry to live a holy life that is pleasing to him. But such a life is not easy, because we are selfish and want to be comfortable. In fact, the longer we follow Jesus, get to know him, and see his righteousness and holiness, we see that we are not even close to being like him. Even the apostle Paul wrote in frustration, "I am a wretched man!"⁸ But Jesus tells us not to worry about our needs but instead to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness above all else.⁹ Although we will not become exactly like Jesus in this life, he will still reward us in the next. God says that at that time, "they will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any burning heat; for the Lamb in the center of the

⁶ John 4:3-6, 31-34

⁷ John 6:27, 35

⁸ Romans 7:15-24

⁹ Matthew 6:33, 6:10

throne will shepherd them, and will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."¹⁰ Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. For they will be satisfied!"

Persecuted for Following Jesus

The world hated Jesus because he told it that its deeds are evil.¹¹ Those who love God are to live righteous lives and are not to engage in unrighteous behavior, such as drunkenness, illicit sex, excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures, and worshipping other gods. Because Christians cannot approve of such behavior but instead refrain from it, the world hates them.¹² Jesus told his followers they should expect to be persecuted.¹³

Many Christians suffer simply because they are Christians rather than Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists or atheists.¹⁴ In fact, there are many places in the world today where you can be arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and executed for being a follower of Jesus. And, sometimes, those executing Christians think they are serving God in the process!¹⁵ Jesus has something to say to those who suffer because of their righteous behavior or because they are Christians. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. For the kingdom of God is theirs. Blessed are you when people revile you, hate you, exclude and reject you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you, and persecute you because of me."¹⁶

¹⁰ Revelation 7:16-17; Romans 14:17

¹¹ John 7:7; cf. 3:19-20; 15:18-21

¹² 1 Peter 2:12, 20; 3:16; 4:4; Matthew 10:22, 24-25; Luke 21:17; John 15:19-20

¹³ Matthew 10:25

¹⁴ 1 Peter 4:14, 16

¹⁵ John 16:2

¹⁶ Matthew 5:10-11; Luke 6:22

Remember that to be “blessed” in this context means to be joyful and carefree. But how can the follower of Jesus feel this way when being persecuted? Jesus said, “Rejoice and be glad. For your reward in heaven is great. For they treated the prophets in the same way.”¹⁷ Jesus wants his followers to know they are not alone in being persecuted. For he and the prophets were likewise hated and persecuted for the same reasons. So, we need not be afraid or troubled because, if we suffer for the right reasons and not for doing evil, we will be rewarded, we will find favor with God, and God’s Spirit will rest on them.¹⁸

When being persecuted as Christians, we should remember how Jesus responded to persecution and follow his example, not reviling those reviling us, neither returning evil for evil, nor insult for insult, nor threatening those persecuting us, but entrusting ourselves to God and praising him.¹⁹ Responding to persecution in this manner, glorifies God and he responds by giving his favor to such a person.²⁰

Now take time as a team to discuss what stood out to you, what you learned, or what challenged you the most.

¹⁷ Matthew 5:12; Luke 6:23; cf. James 5:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

¹⁸ 1 Peter 2:20; 3:9, 14; 4:14; cf. 3:17; 4:15-16

¹⁹ Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9; 4:16, 19; 1 Corinthians 4:12-13

²⁰ Matthew 5:12; 1 Peter 2:12, 20

Daily Reflection

What did God teach you today? What activity stretched you? Take time to process your day with God. It's important!

ACTIVITIES...

What one activity from today stretched you most? Write about it.

PEOPLE...

What conversation stuck out most to you today? Why? Who was it with?

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

What do you want to take away from today? What did you learn that'll be important to remember?

I FEEL...

Use one word to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences.

A large triangle is drawn on lined paper. Inside the triangle, there is a horizontal line. In the top left corner, there are two gray shapes that look like pieces of paper or tape.

Evening Prayer

Be still. Get comfortable. Pray. Pray honestly. Pray creatively. Prayer can be simple - pray simply. Be with God.

Prayer Art

Spend time in silence. Think about the day. Thank God for it. Spend time reflecting on a scene you always want to remember? Draw it here as a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

SAMPLE

Day Four

Keep Pushing Even When You Are Tired...

Morning Time with God

Salt & Light Devo Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:13-16

Salt of the Earth

Jesus told his followers, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt becomes tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."²¹ Salt was a necessity in antiquity. It was used to season, purify, and preserve food. Jesus said those who follow him are "the salt of the earth." By this, he means that his followers make the world a better place in which to live. How do they do this?

Jesus said his followers are to love God with their entire being and to love their neighbors as themselves.²² He then gave an example of what it looks like to love one's neighbor. A man was traveling on a road and saw a stranger who had been robbed, beaten up, and left to die. A few religious people passed by the stranger without helping him, even avoiding him. Then another man noticed the stranger and saw to it that he received medical care, even paying for it himself, though he knew nothing about the stranger. This man showed mercy to the stranger and loved him as if himself.²³ When Jesus' followers love others in this manner, the world is a better place.

Just as salt delays meat from spoiling, Jesus's disciples delay the morality of the world from spoiling. The early Christians refused to participate in the sexual freedom of their society

²¹ Matthew 5:13

²² Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 22:35-40; Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 7:12

²³ Luke 10:30-37

and were called atheists because they refused to worship any other gods than the true one, even being bold enough to say the Christian God is the only true God.²⁴ Many of them were persecuted as a result. Some were even martyred. Today, Christians refuse to participate in the traditions and practices of their family and friends that are forbidden by God, such as witchcraft and calling up one's ancestors.²⁵ They refuse to agree with others, even family members, that these traditions and practices are morally acceptable with God.²⁶ And they refuse to say one may reach God apart from Jesus.²⁷ Because they cannot agree with the world, they expose its evil deeds, deeds the world would adopt and practice without resistance, if not for salty Christians.²⁸

Jesus adds that if salt were to become tasteless, it could not become salty again and would be entirely useless. When a Christian makes peace with the world in order to avoid being mocked and persecuted, he or she loses their saltiness and becomes ineffective for God to use in his kingdom. James the brother of Jesus went as far as to say that "whoever decides to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."²⁹ Are you salt? Do your actions make the world a better place in which to live? Does your life preserve morality and illuminate a clear path to God?

Light of the World

The world is a spiritually dark place in which to live. Many have witnessed the work of evil spirits. Moreover, people do many kinds of evil deeds in order to obtain their desires,

²⁴ See 1 Corinthians 5; Acts 19:23-41; 1 John 4:1-7; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 3:2; 9:2

²⁵ Deuteronomy 18:10-14

²⁶ Psalm 1; Proverbs 1:10-19; Matthew 7:21-23; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:17-24; 5:1-13; Colossians 3:5, 10; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

²⁷ Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 3:36; 8:24; 14:6

²⁸ Ephesians 5:11

²⁹ James 4:4

persecuting, falsely accusing, and even killing those who hinder them in any way. God responded by sending his son Jesus to bring light to shine in the darkness. He countered hate with love and replaced selfishness with sacrifice. He brought a message from God. The message was for people to turn away from their evil deeds, submit to God, and follow his son Jesus. Jesus illuminates the way for people so they can come out of spiritual darkness if they desire. He is the light of the world.³⁰

Jesus taught that his followers are to be "sons of light."³¹ Spiritual darkness remains, and Christians are to bring light to the world just as their master did. Jesus told his followers, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand. And it provides light to all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, in order that they may observe your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."³²

Those who follow Jesus do not do so secretly. The light they have received is not for them only. So, they are to bring light to the world just as Jesus did. There are some who prefer darkness to the light and will hate you even as they hated Jesus.³³ There are others who may prefer darkness now but later will thirst for the light when they see how their deeds have produced destruction in their lives and the lives of others. And there are others who will see God's light because of your life and will praise him for his goodness and mercy.

Jesus calls his followers to be salt and light in this world. The Christian life is not to be lived in such a way that the believer

³⁰ John 1:5; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46

³¹ Luke 16:8; John 12:36; Philippians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Matthew 5:43-48

³² Matthew 5:14-16

³³ John 3:19-20; 15:18-21

continually receives but never gives. One of the saddest things a Christian can hear from a non-believer is "I did not know you are a Christian." For such a testimony suggests you are not living in obedience to Jesus. The true follower of Jesus acts as salt and light, knowing that living in this manner will almost certainly result in persecution.

Now take time as a team to discuss what stood out to you, what you learned, or what challenged you the most.

SAMPLE

Daily Reflection

Process your day with God. What did He teach you? What activity stretched you? Write, think, pray. Share with your team at the end what God is up to.

ACTIVITIES...

What did you do today? Make a list, or simply highlight the parts of your day you remember.

SAMPLE

PEOPLE...

Who do you have on your heart from today? Write about them.

[illegible]

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

What do you want to take away from today? What did you learn that'll be important to remember?

I FEEL...

Use one word to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences.

A large triangle is drawn on lined paper. Inside the triangle, there is a horizontal line. In the top left corner, there are two gray shapes that look like pieces of paper or tape.

Evening Prayer

Be in conversation with God. Pray. It's important.

Poetry Prayer

Tonight, write to your King in the form of poetry. Use any type of poetry you'd like - sonnet, free-verse, haiku, etc. Remember, this is just for you & God. No one else will read this - unless you choose to share it.

Handwriting practice lines for poetry writing.

Day Five

Pushing Yourself Deeper...

Morning Time with God

Receiving Treasures in Heaven Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:19-24, 7:7-12

Choose Your Love

Jesus tells his followers not to spend time amassing for themselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. Instead, we are to amass for ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and thieves cannot break in and steal.³⁴ Jesus tells us why: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be."³⁵

In 1949, an American missionary named Jim Elliot wrote the following in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." The price one pays for following Jesus is an investment God keeps for them in heaven. And God pays very generous returns on that investment. Jesus has already paid the price for our admission into heaven. But what we do in this life after we choose to follow Jesus affects the glories we will enjoy in heaven.

Can we amass treasures on earth and in heaven? Yes. But it will not benefit us. For any treasure amassed here is treasure that eventually will be lost. We cannot take our possessions with us to heaven. Moreover, the more we focus on amassing wealth for ourselves on earth, the less we will think about God and doing his will. However, the more we focus on loving, pleasing, and serving God, the more we will become attached to him and look forward to our future home in heaven. So, Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters. For you will either

³⁴ Matthew 6:19-20

³⁵ Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:33-34

hate the one and love the other or you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and possessions."³⁶ The principle Jesus is teaching is that his followers are to have limited attachments to the things this life offers and to be single-minded in our devotion to God.

Jesus is not teaching that it is wrong to be wealthy. In fact, God has gifted some people with an ability to make a lot of money. Those individuals face a temptation most people do not experience: the temptation to spend most of their time working toward obtaining wealth, then spending it on personal pleasures. They may give a small percentage of their wealth to advance God's kingdom and to ease the sufferings of others. And the amount of money they give to God's kingdom may be even more than what the average person gives. But that does not impress God. Jesus said that a widow who gives her last two small coins gives more than the wealthy, because she gives a greater percentage of all that she has.³⁷ She gives one hundred percent whereas the wealthy give only a small percentage. God measures generosity in terms of percentage rather than the amount.

Remember that there is a downside to being wealthy. Being rich in this life makes this life more enjoyable, but distracts one away from seeking God, making it more difficult to develop a relationship with him.³⁸ So, many of those who are poor in this life will have a higher status in heaven than those who are rich in this life because the former were more deeply devoted to God.

Our perspective on life guides the way we live on a daily basis. When we are single-minded in our desire to know, please, and serve God, our actions reflect that perspective and we store

³⁶ Matthew 6:24

³⁷ Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:42-44

³⁸ Mark 10:17-31, especially 10:25; Matthew 19:16-24; 1 Timothy 6:17

up treasure in heaven for ourselves.³⁹ Jim Elliot was single-minded in his desire to share Jesus' message to natives who had never heard that message and who killed him when he attempted to share it with them. But God worked through Elliot's sacrifice so that the entire tribe, including the man who had killed Elliot, later embraced the message and followed Jesus. Elliot was wise when he said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."⁴⁰ He stored up for himself treasures in heaven. Jesus asked, "What will it benefit a person if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?"⁴¹ Where is your treasure?

Prayer

Jesus told his disciples to pray, asking God to provide for their needs: "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. And the one who seeks finds. And to the one who knocks it will be opened."⁴²

Can Jesus' followers really trust God to provide for their needs? Jesus says they can and provides the reason: "What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? If you, then, being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"⁴³

The logic is simple. Despite their moral weaknesses and failings, parents provide for their children because they love them. Since our heavenly Father is absolutely holy and loves us with a pure love, we can be more certain he will provide for

³⁹ Matthew 6:22-23

⁴⁰ Luke 16:9

⁴¹ Matthew 16:26

⁴² Matthew 7:7-8

⁴³ Matthew 7:9-11, 6:1

us than we can be certain parents will provide for the children they love. So, followers of Jesus can ask, seek, and knock, because God hears their prayers and will answer them. In an earlier lesson, we learned that we should not worry about what we will eat or drink or about having adequate clothing. For if God cares enough for the birds to see they are fed and clothes wildflowers with beauty even though they exist only for a very short time, he is even more concerned for us and will see that we are provided for.⁴⁴

However, there is a problem. Those of us who have been Christians for many years have experienced countless occasions when we did not receive what we had asked for. We did not find what we had sought. And many doors remained closed that we had wanted opened. How do we reconcile these experiences with Jesus' words?

Similar to caring parents, God answers our prayers in three major ways. Sometimes he says yes. And we rejoice in answered prayer. Sometimes God answers us but has us wait for any number of reasons. Perhaps it is because a later time will be better for us or his kingdom or both. But there are times when God says no. Saying no to our prayers can be because we ask selfishly⁴⁵ or because we have sin in our life that we refuse to stop doing.⁴⁶ God may also say no because he knows our request will harm us or because he has something better for us. I know of several occasions when God did not answer my prayer and I felt terrible because of it. But years later I learned more about the matter for which I had prayed and was glad God had declined my request. God may also say no because he wants to develop a greater reliance on him or develop character in us that is more like that of

⁴⁴ Matthew 6:25-33

⁴⁵ James 4:2-3

⁴⁶ Psalm 66:18

Jesus.⁴⁷ We must remember that God's primary purpose for us is our holiness and not our happiness. And God's priorities should be ours. Jesus said, "Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. And all that you need will be given to you."⁴⁸ The apostle Paul wrote,

And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose. Because those whom he foreknew, he also predetermined to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over [to be killed] for us all, how will he not also freely give to us all things?⁴⁹

So, God will provide all of our needs when doing so does not conflict with a greater purpose he may have. And what is it that we actually need? We need food and water. What if we do not receive an adequate amount of these? We will die. But what happens if we die? We go to be with Jesus in heaven. The apostle Paul had visited heaven and knew what it was like.⁵⁰ So great was his desire to return there that he wrote, "To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."⁵¹ For Paul, his entire life was concerned about pleasing Christ, serving Christ, and representing Christ faithfully as his ambassador.⁵² And death is something he preferred over this present life because he would then be with Christ while enjoying all the glories of heaven.⁵³

Now take time as a team to discuss what stood out to you, what you learned, or what challenged you the most.

⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:6-10

⁴⁸ Matthew 6:33

⁴⁹ Romans 8:28-32

⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Romans 8:18

⁵¹ Philippians 1:21

⁵² 2 Corinthians 5:20

⁵³ Philippians 1:22-24; Romans 8:38-39

Daily Reflection

Process your day now. Don't go to bed without taking time to sit silently in your activities, people, takeaways, and feelings from your day. You need to process.

ACTIVITIES...

What was your favorite part of today? Why?

PEOPLE...

Whose life encouraged you today? Why?

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

What do you want to take away from today? What did you learn that'll be important to remember?

I FEEL...

Use one word to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences.

A large triangle is drawn on a background of horizontal lines. A pencil icon is positioned at the top left. A single horizontal line is drawn inside the triangle, intended for writing the answer.

Evening Prayer

What do you want to talk with God about tonight? Do you believe prayer can change things? Pray as though your prayer matters – it does!

Prayer Journal

Write out in sentence and paragraph form an in-depth prayer to God. Be specific, sincere, and vulnerable. Just write. Be honest, simple and pray to God like you would talk to a friend.

Lord,

Handwriting practice lines for the prayer journal.

Amen.

SAMPLE

Day Six

Finishing Strong...

SAMPLE

Morning Time with God

The Narrow & Wide Gates Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:13-29

The Correct Road to Take

Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is spacious that leads to destruction and there are many entering through it. But the gate is narrow and the way leading to life presses in on those traveling it. And there are few finding it."⁵⁴

Jesus tells us the way leading to eternal life is small and uncomfortable. As one goes through the gate and a thin opening, the walls close in and cram those continuing down the path. Throughout his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has taught us how to live in a manner that pleases God. Holiness goes beyond what we do and also involves purity of our speech, purity of our thoughts, purity of our reasons for doing good, not returning evil to those who have wronged us but doing good to them and forgiving them, trusting God to meet our needs while prioritizing what we do and how we use our resources to benefit God's kingdom. Indeed, these are very difficult. So, there are few who take this path and find eternal life.

But there is another road one may take. Different from the narrow and uncomfortable way of Jesus, travelers can go through an open gate with a wide entrance and a spacious road. There is plenty of room and travelers are comfortable. Many have chosen that way. But Jesus informs us that this road leads to one's destruction rather than to eternal life.

⁵⁴ Matthew 7:13-14

Each of us must choose whether we will strive to please God or the world and ourselves. There will be many occasions during our lifetime when we will have to choose one over the other. The way of Jesus is not easy. But it is worth it. Jesus says those who want to follow him must put him above their dearest family members: father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even one's own life.⁵⁵ Those who do will be greatly rewarded in this life and in the next.⁵⁶ Elsewhere Jesus says that anyone who wants to follow him must be willing to be killed for doing so. However, whoever loses his life for the sake of Jesus's message will find eternal life.⁵⁷

Because the way of Jesus is often difficult and costly, he encourages those who are considering following him to weigh the costs of doing so. A wise person who decides to build something determines how much it will cost and whether he has enough money to complete the project. Before going into battle, a wise king will consider whether he can defeat his enemy with his own army. If he cannot, he will attempt to negotiate a peace agreement rather than go into battle. In a similar manner, the wise person will consider the costs of following Jesus. Sometimes family members reject those who decide to leave the religion in which they were raised and follow Jesus. Sometimes those who decide to follow Jesus lose their jobs, are treated badly, and are even killed. Those who follow Jesus must be willing to give all.⁵⁸ But the reward is peace with God and eternal life.

Authentic Holiness

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that his true followers will produce good fruit while counterfeit followers will

⁵⁵ Luke 14:26

⁵⁶ Mark 10:29-30; Luke 18:29-30

⁵⁷ Matthew 16:24-26

⁵⁸ Luke 14:28-33

produce bad fruit. False prophets can have an appearance of being devoted to God when, in fact, they are devoted mainly to themselves. So, we are to look at their fruit. For if they are false prophets, their evil deeds will eventually become visible. Jesus instructs his followers to be "pure in heart." For if they are clean on the inside, they will produce clean works just as a good tree produces good fruit.

Now if we are to focus on who we are on the inside, may we then ignore the commandments in the Bible that tell us how we are to act? No. Jesus said he did not come to abolish the biblical commandments but rather to fulfill them.⁵⁹ However, here is the problem: While the religious leaders of Jesus' day worked toward keeping the biblical laws, they still fell terribly short because they were focusing on the acts forbidden by the laws instead of the moral principles that render those acts as bad fruit. In reality, being holy in the eyes of God demands much more than doing certain deeds while not doing others. Authentic holiness only involves the person inside the body. When the inner person is holy, deeds that are holy will result.⁶⁰

How does this play out in life? Jesus reminds those listening to him of the commandment given by God not to murder and that murderers are held guilty before the court. However, he adds, that God will even hold guilty everyone who is angry with his brother and who uses harsh words, insults, and abusive language.⁶¹ For these are products of an inner person who will murder if provoked enough. God wants the inner person to be slow to anger, forgiving, and working to live in peace with others. This is so important to God that Jesus says if you remember that a fellow Christian has something against you while you are worshipping God, stop your worship for the

⁵⁹ Matthew 5:17-18

⁶⁰ Luke 6:45

⁶¹ Matthew 5:21-22

moment and go to your fellow Christian and try to reconcile with him. After that, you may return to worshipping God.⁶² This is what authentic holiness looks like.⁶³ One who is holy on the inside will produce holy deeds even as a good tree produces good fruit.

Now take time as a team to discuss what stood out to you, what you learned, or what challenged you the most.

⁶² Matthew 5:23-24

⁶³ See also 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Daily Reflection

Shh... Sit quietly. What happened today? What did you learn about yourself? Take time now to rethink your day before going to bed.

ACTIVITIES...

What did you do today? Did any specific thing stick out, which you want to remember?

PEOPLE...

Who frustrated you today? Why? Write about it.

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

What do you want to take away from today? What did you learn that'll be important to remember?

I FEEL...

Use one word to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences.

A large triangle is drawn on a background of horizontal lines. Inside the triangle, there is a single horizontal line. In the top-left corner of the image, there are two grey, diagonal shapes that look like stylized arrows or chevrons pointing towards the top-left.

Evening Prayer

What is on your heart right now? Pray about it. You can share anything with God.

Breath Prayer

Breath prayer is an ancient Christian prayer practice, and the goal is for your prayer to God to become natural with your breathing.

Take a few seconds to slow down, take a few deep breaths, and calm down before the Lord. Think of a name for God that you connect with, for example: Jesus, Yahweh, Messiah, Savior.

Imagine that God is asking you, what do you need right now? Like the blind man on the road to Jericho, Jesus kindly looks you in the eyes and asks, "What do you want from me?"

This prayer is two parts: as you breathe in, call out on the name of the Lord you chose, and as you exhale, say your one request to God.

Let this prayer be a time to calm down, relax, and slow your heart before God. Continue this posture for as long as you need.

Feel free to write your prayer below...

God is my refuge and strength
Psalms 46:1

Day Seven

Still Going...

SAMPLE

Morning Time with God

The Cost of Holiness Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:27-30, Luke 14:25-27,
Colossians 3:8-10

We are to Live as though Dead

Jesus wants his followers to be holy, not only in the things they do but also in their very being. He taught,

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.⁶⁴

Jesus is saying when a man looks at a woman with sexual lust, he has acted in an unholy manner, since sexual desire is to be satisfied only within marriage. Therefore, holiness does not involve only what we do but also what we think.⁶⁵

What Jesus said next is stunning.

Now if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it from you. For it is better for you to lose one of your body parts than for your entire body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it from you. For it is better for you to lose one of your body parts than for your whole body to go into hell.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Matthew 5:27-28

⁶⁵ Similarly, in the Ten Commandments, God not only said, "You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14), he also said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." (Exodus 20:17)

⁶⁶ Matthew 5:29-30; cf. 18:8-9

Is Jesus actually instructing his followers to maim themselves in order to avoid sinning? No. He is using a figure of speech—excessiveness—in order to make his point clearly and memorably.⁶⁷ This was a technique for public speaking in his day and he uses it elsewhere: (He says)

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.⁶⁸

Jesus is not actually teaching his followers to hate their family members, since elsewhere he instructs them to honor their parents and love others.⁶⁹ Jesus states the same teaching without using excessive language:

The one who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And the one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.⁷⁰

In the former text, Jesus uses excessive language—hate—to communicate that the love his followers have for him must greatly exceed the love they have for their family members.

Since Jesus is using excessive language when he speaks of gouging out your eye or cutting off your hand if either causes you to sin, what is it he is trying to tell you? You are to think of your eye or hand as being dead or absent if either is leading you to sin. Consider what the apostle Paul wrote:

⁶⁷ When Jesus lived, there was a man named Seneca whom some regard as the smartest Roman mind of that time. Seneca wrote that one should throw away any desire that is tearing away at the heart and if one is unable to do so, he should tear his heart out. (Seneca, *Epistulae morales* 51.13)

⁶⁸ Luke 14:26

⁶⁹ Matthew 5:43-48; 15:1-9; 19:16-19

⁷⁰ Matthew 10:37

Seek the things above where Christ is seated at God's right. Think about the things above, not about the things on the earth. For you have died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.⁷¹

We are to think of things as though we have already died and are now with Christ in heaven. Paul also wrote,

Therefore, put to death your earthly body parts:⁷² sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. . . . Lay aside all of them: anger, wrath, malice, slander, filthy and abusive language. Do not lie to one another, since you have laid aside the old person with its practices and have put on the new person who is being renewed as it applies knowledge about the character qualities of the one who created it.⁷³

For Paul, putting to death our members is the same as laying aside unholy deeds and desires in ourselves. So, when we are tempted to sin, we should regard ourselves as dead. For dead people cannot sin. Helpful tips on how to do this will be given the next time we meet.

Now take time as a team to discuss what stood out to you, what you learned, or what challenged you the most.

⁷¹ Colossians 3:1-3; cf. 2:20

⁷² The Greek word Paul uses here for "body parts" is *me/os* (literally "members") and is the same Greek word Jesus uses in Matthew 5:29-30. See also Romans 6:11-13, 19; 7:5-6, 22-23; James 4:1

⁷³ Colossians 3:8-10. See also Romans 7:23; 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:26, 29, 31; James 1:19-20

Daily Reflection

Sit quietly. What happened today? What did you learn about yourself? Take time to rethink your day before going to bed.

ACTIVITIES...

What did you do today? Did any specific thing stick out to you from today you want to remember?

PEOPLE...

Who frustrated you today?
Why? Write about it.

[illegible]

MAIN TAKEAWAY...

What do you want to take away from today? What did you learn that'll be important to remember?

I FEEL...

Use one word to describe how you are feeling about today's experiences.

A large triangle is drawn on a background of horizontal lines. A pencil icon is positioned at the top left. A single horizontal line is drawn inside the triangle, intended for writing the answer.

Evening Prayer

What is on your heart right now? Pray about it. You can share anything with God.

Breath Prayer

Breath prayer is an ancient Christian prayer practice, and the goal is for your prayer to God to become natural with your breathing.

Take a few seconds to slow down, take a few deep breaths, and calm down before the Lord. Think of a name for God that you connect with, for example: Jesus, Yahweh, Messiah, Savior.

Imagine that God is asking you, what do you need right now? Like the blind man on the road to Jericho, Jesus kindly looks you in the eyes and asks, "What do you want from me?"

This prayer is two parts: as you breathe in, call out on the name of the Lord you chose, and as you exhale, say your one request to God.

Let this prayer be a time to calm down, relax, and slow your heart before God. Continue this posture for as long as you need.

Name for God:

Your Request to God:

SAMPLE

Day Eight

Standing Strong...

Morning Time with God

Living Sacrifices Devo by *Michael Licona*

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2, Matthew 5:38-48

How to Live as though Dead

The apostle Paul wrote,

I urge you my brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service to God. And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may test and approve what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.⁷⁴

Paul urges followers of Jesus to regard themselves as sacrificing their very life for Jesus. It is not necessary to subject ourselves to death for this type of sacrifice, since this type requires that we renew our minds in such a manner that we are not thinking in terms of the world in which we live but rather in terms of living a holy life that focuses on doing God's will. We must discipline our thinking.

How does this principle look when applied? Let us suppose you are a farmer and that someone has poisoned some of your cattle. This loss will make your life more difficult. You are angry and want to hurt the person or people who did this. You may even be so angry that you want to kill them. However, you cannot attack them with a machete if you do not have a

⁷⁴ Romans 12:1-2

hand. You cannot kill them if you are already dead and with Jesus in heaven.

What, then, would be a proper response to someone who has poisoned some of your cattle? Jesus taught,

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'⁷⁵ But I say to you, do not resist the evil person, but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. And to the one who wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him also have your coat. And whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. . . . You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those persecuting you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise upon evil and good people and sends rain upon righteous and unrighteous people. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you are hospitable only to your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not also unbelievers do the same? Therefore, you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.⁷⁶

Jesus' apostles carried on his teaching when writing to churches. The apostle Paul wrote, "Do not pay back evil for evil"⁷⁷ while the apostle Peter said, "not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but giving a blessing instead. For you were called to this in order that you may inherit a blessing."⁷⁸ Now this does not mean that the farmer could not work with

⁷⁵ Exodus 21:23-35; Leviticus 24:17-22; Deuteronomy 19:21

⁷⁶ Matthew 5:38-48

⁷⁷ Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15

⁷⁸ 1 Peter 3:9

the governing authorities in order to bring justice to those who had poisoned his cattle. For God established authorities to administer punishment on those who do evil.⁷⁹ And regardless of whether those authorities will do God's work in this situation, God will repay evildoers as the apostle Paul tells us:

Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God's wrath. For it is written, "Revenge is mine. I will repay," says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. . . . Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.⁸⁰

The principle for us to remember is we are to allow the Judge of the universe to do his job. He will judge and punish evildoers through the governing authorities on earth or will do it himself when they fail. But Jesus' followers are not to take upon themselves a responsibility God has not given them. Instead, they are to love their enemies and forgive them. Such kindness may even lead their enemies to turn away from practicing evil and follow Jesus. But if they do not repent and follow Jesus, he will judge and punish them. This kind of thinking—and the proper actions that conform to those thoughts—does not come naturally or easily. Proper thinking that comes from a renewal of the mind requires a sustained effort to discipline how we think. Just as athletes exercise self-control and discipline their bodies to win, followers of Jesus must discipline themselves in their spiritual walk so they will win.⁸¹

Now take time as a team to discuss what stood out to you, what you learned, or what challenged you the most.

⁷⁹ Romans 13:4

⁸⁰ Romans 12:19-21; Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1; Proverbs 25:21-22; 1 Peter 3:12

⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Daily Reflection

Think deeply about your day. Examine all you did, reflect on those you met, ask what you want to take from today, and test yourself on how you're feeling right now. Process.

ACTIVITIES...

What took place the last 24 hours? Anything stand out?

2024

PEOPLE...

Who stuck out to you today?
Why?

[illegible]

...one word to describe how
are feeling about today's
periences.

...one word to describe how
are feeling about today's
periences.

A large triangle is drawn on lined paper. Inside the triangle, there is a horizontal line. To the left of the triangle, there are some grey, stylized letters that look like 'X' and 'V'.

Evening Prayer

Did you know prayer cannot be taken away from you? Most of what we have can be stolen, but not prayer. Prayer is your communication with God. Pray. Pray continually. Pray tonight.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Take time tonight to write out in sentence and paragraph form an in-depth prayer of thanksgiving to God. Be specific, sincere and vulnerable. Pour out your thanksgiving to God.

God,

Thank you for _____

Amen.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

MAVEN

SAMPLE

SECTION FOUR

TRIP DEBRIEF

TAKING YOUR EXPERIENCE HOME

Your Apologetics Immersive Experience has come to an end; however, what you learned about God, yourself, others, and what you believe and why you believe it can stick with you for the rest of your life. The experience will live on if you take time now to intentionally revisit your trip journal to thoroughly understand what God did.

Use these five tools to help you reflect on your experience.

- **Feeling Word Summary:** Go back. Catalogue your feelings from each day. What do you find?
- **Main Takeaway Summary:** Rewind. List each main takeaway you wrote. What themes do you see?
- **Ten-Year Takeaway Summary:** Use the themes found in your takeaways to find one long-lasting takeaway.
- **Two-Minute Story:** Sharing your story from this trip will keep it alive. Write out your story.
- **Action Items:** Don't stop. Keep pursuing truth, seeking goodness, and creating beauty as you get home. How might you do that?

Let this Apologetics Immersive Experience be a launching pad into your next season with God. Go home. Make the changes you need. Find the answers you didn't get. Seek God. Share.

Feeling Word Summary

What were you feeling throughout your trip? Go back now to your evening reflections from each day and write down your feeling words. Sit with each feeling for a second before moving on to the next one. Why did you feel that way?

Feeling Words...

- _____ pg. 114
- _____ pg. 120
- _____ pg. 129
- _____ pg. 137
- _____ pg. 146
- _____ pg. 155
- _____ pg. 162
- _____ pg. 170

Your Analysis...

Study your feelings as a whole from the week. What sticks out? Why? Is there a theme? Put a *P* next to each positive feeling. Place an *N* next to each negative feeling. Does this tell you anything? Write your insight here. Be honest. Be real. What do you see?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. In the top-left corner, there is a small, dark grey triangular tab or piece of tape protruding from the edge. The paper appears to be part of a binder or folder.

Main Takeaway Summary

What were your main takeaways from each day? Did you learn a lot of new things? Were your takeaways practical, spiritual, or both? Go back and organize each main takeaway sentence below. Sit with each one as you write it down.

Main Takeaways...

- _____ pg. 114
- _____ pg. 120
- _____ pg. 129
- _____ pg. 137
- _____ pg. 146
- _____ pg. 155
- _____ pg. 162
- _____ pg. 170

Your Analysis...

Educate yourself on your list above. What do you see? What do you learn? Write about it.

[illegible]

Ten-Year Takeaway

Ten years from now what do you want to remember from this Immersive Experience? Not memories per se, but what takeaway do you want to hang onto over the next decade? Maybe it's "*Truth exists*" or "*God wants me to be concerned about what I eat*" or a million other things. Write around the box your thoughts, and then when you're ready write down in one sentence one takeaway from this trip you want to stick with you forever.

My Ten-Year Takeaway...

Two-Minute Story

Debriefing Your Apologetics Immersive Experience

Introduction

Two-Minute Story

Experiences are created as a vehicle for building memories, or another way of putting it - creating stories with God. Stories are powerful as we use these to share what God has done in our lives during your Immersive Experience. When you get home from the Apologetics Immersive Experience what's the first question your parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, or your dog asks you?

"How was the Immersive Experience? Tell me all about it?"

Sometimes this question is energizing, but many times it is overwhelming, as it can be hard to articulate an experience on the spot in a way a person can connect with. Often people ask wanting to listen for only two minutes. Often my responses are a simple, "The trip was good. I had a lot of fun." Over the years, however, I have been challenged that this answer is not sufficient as I lose an opportunity to share with another person what God just did in my life.

We can use Two-Minute Stories as an awesome vehicle to easily and effectively share our God-stories from the Immersive Experience, because soon we will be asked about the experience. This time we'll have a heartfelt and God-honoring story!

As your trip is coming to an end, take some time now to prayerfully and thoughtfully think through a story you could share with others, which would best sum up your experience. Use the brainstorming sheet, outline template, and rough drafts, to guide you through your Two-Minute Story creation process. Have fun with this and make it your own.

Instructions

Two-Minute Story

Follow these instructions as you shape your story.

1. Use a captivating opening sentence (a good hook).

Example: *"This week was pretty bizarre. I finally spoke after a whole year of silence, and I learned a really powerful lesson from a weird source."*

Alyssa S., Biblical Immersive Experience 2017

2. Use scripture to support your main takeaway.

Example: *"I didn't change anyone's minds or feelings about Mormonism. I learned God uses each and every conversation for His own plan and purpose. Like in Luke 5:12-15 when a man with leprosy recognized that by God's will only, he can be healed. I may never know what will happen to the people I had conversations with on my Biblical Immersive Experience. But I know God used every word of mine to share love and speak truth to others who have never heard truth."*

Michelle W., Biblical Immersive Experience 2017

3. Write a story which implicitly answers one question...

- What did God teach you about humility on this trip?
- What did you learn about yourself? How did you?
- What did you learn about God? How did you learn that?
- How did God challenge you?

4. Consider the following tips when writing your story

- Give Specific Details – names, colors, feelings, etc.
- Be Personable – talk about what you learned.
- Finish Strong – tie your ending into your hook.

Example Story

Two-Minute Story

God moved in me while at the Biblical Immersive Experience in Utah. Through hearing the testimonies and ministries of locals and transplants in Utah, God revealed to me the full truth and validity of His word. Through conversations with Mormons, God revealed to me the power of His gospel. Through enjoying and resting in His nature, God revealed to me His beauty and creativity.

Still, God had more of His Spirit that He made known to me on the second-to-last night. I led our team in a discussion of how we, or they, were going to take the lessons learned through the week and apply them in new, creative avenues at youth group next year. That was one of the most incredible, heart-breaking experiences of my life.

Spending the majority of my life in youth group the past seven years, watching new leadership build upon everything I felt such a personal connection to, brought up indescribable feelings within me. Through my years in youth group, God built me up as a leader, as I prayed daily for God to grow me like the Levites described in Malachi 2, as a "*priest who guards knowledge, and a leader who people should seek instruction from.*" God used me in great ways, but now He has new plans for me and new leaders in the youth group who are stronger and better equipped than me.

My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing God's work of telling others God's Gospel, and now I have a new mission field in college. Although leaving my youth group is hard, whatever happens, whether my heart or my flesh fails, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Luke S., Biblical Immersive Experience, 2017

Outline

Two-Minute Story

Use this outline as a tool to create your stories roadmap.

I. The Title of Your Story

II. Opening Sentence (Hook)

III. Body Paragraphs

- What question are you implicitly answering?

- What scripture reference are you sharing?

IV. Closing Sentence (Tie in Your Opening & Close Out Story)

Now go find a leader to read your outline to. Once they've given input and approved it, go write your story!

Rough Draft

Two-Minute Story

Title

SAMPLE

Handwriting practice lines with a large diagonal watermark reading "SAMPLE".

Give your rough draft to a student for another round of thoughts and edits. Then write your final draft.

Final Draft

Two-Minute Story

Title

SAMPLE

Handwriting practice lines with a large diagonal 'SAMPLE' watermark.

Full Name (Printed): _____

Congratulations! Now, go find your MAVEN Field Guide so they can take a photo, which by doing you're giving them permission to share, and use as they see fit. Now go share your story with others.

Action Items to Consider

If you would like to continue sharing your faith and pushing yourself in your spiritual walk here are some possible challenges to help you along. Fill it out, share it with your teammates for accountability.

Share the Truth with Your Friends...

- Regularly seek out spiritual discussions with non-believers.

Read the Word...

- Read the Bible in one year.
- Read the Bible _____ times per week.
- Read the Bible for _____ minutes a day.

Be with God in Prayer...

- Pray every day for _____ minutes.
- Drive in silence _____ times a week.
- Desire to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and character.
- Go on a Prayer Walk _____ times a month.

Study...

- Read one or more of the books in the suggested reading list and resource list.
- Listen to one or more of the podcasts on the list of resources.
- Read one or more of the blogs on the list of resources.

Action Step(s)...

What action are you going to take? How are you going to accomplish this?

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

MAVEN

SAMPLE

SECTION FIVE

TRIP RESOURCES

HELPFUL TOOLS ON AND AFTER THE TRIP

In this section you will find a variety of helpful resources. Some of these you'll be instructed to use as tools before the trip, while on the trip, and for after the trip.

Here are the tools you'll find in this section...

- Packing List
- Guidelines & Expectations
- Immersive Experience Jobs
- The After Survey
- Conversational Survey on Religion and Morality
- Campus Conversational Survey on Life & Happiness
- Campus Prayer Guide
- Five Helpful Articles | *Debating Atheists* by Dan Grossenbach
- Helpful Videos, Podcasts, Websites, & Books

You may get stumped. You won't have every answer. That's okay. But, don't just leave it at that. Go find answers. Keep studying.

Packing List

What to Bring...

Important / Read this "what-to-bring" list with the mission trip purpose at the forefront of your minds. And be prepared to sacrifice your "personal rights" or desires for the good of the group. MAVEN has a NO ELECTRONICS policy so please leave your phones and other electronic devices at home.

Necessary Items

Look at the weather report before you pack. Consider how many days you'll be gone. Keep packing simple. Use travel size items when applicable.

- ☐ Casual Clothing (Still keep nice though)
 - **Note to Girls:** Pack respectfully. No low-cut shirts, spaghetti straps, or tight shirts – nothing that shows cleavage or midriffs. You will have to "cover up" if your shirt is considered too tight, low cut, etc.
 - **Note to Guys:** Do not dress sloppily (i.e. showing your boxers, ripped clothing). Bring things like jeans, shorts, polos, button downs, t-shirts, etc.
- ☐ Grubby Clothes (For hiking and working out in)
- ☐ Sweatshirt or Jacket
- ☐ Shoes: Walking or Hiking
- ☐ Sandals
- ☐ Towel: For showering, swimming, etc...
- ☐ Bathing Suit – Please keep it modest
- ☐ Toiletries: i.e. soap, shampoo, deodorant
- ☐ Sleeping Bag & Pillow
- ☐ Air Mattress or Sleeping Pad: We are sleeping on floors
- ☐ Book 1: The Holy Bible: the actual book – no electronics
- ☐ Book 2: I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist

- ☐ Book 3: MAVEN's Apologetics Immersive Experience Guidebook
- ☐ Daypack / Backpack
- ☐ Water Bottle
- ☐ Meal Money (\$20/day)

Optional

- ☐ Snacks
- ☐ Sun Protection: Sunscreen, Hat, Sunglasses
- ☐ Basketball Shoes
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Camera: Phone cameras aren't allowed
- ☐ Spending Money: For snack, souvenirs, etc...
- ☐ Weather Dependent: Hat or beanie, gloves, or sweaters
- ☐ Weather Dependent: Modest swimsuits, bug repellent, etc...

What Not to Bring

- ☐ **Any Electronics:** no DVD players, no iPods, no Video Games.
- ☐ **Cell Phones:** Leave these at home, but if you must bring one it must stay turned OFF during the majority of the trip. If your leadership allows you to bring them, there will be designated times to call your parents. We know from years past that cell phones can be a HUGE distraction from God's work on this trip.

Notes on Packing...

Everything but your sleeping bag must fit into ONE duffel bag or suitcase. This suitcase CANNOT be huge—think small, think reusable clothing, think about putting up with less than your dream wardrobe. Remember, people almost never pack too little; they pack too much! You may use a backpack to carry non-clothes items like your Bible, apologetics books or camera.

Guidelines & Expectations

In order to get the most out of our time on the Immersive Experience, it's important to get on the same page with some important guidelines and expectations.

Please read through each expectation, checking the box to indicate you've read and agreed to what's being asked of you. If you aren't comfortable with an expectation, please come talk to a group leader so we can get on the same page.

I AGREE TO...

- ☐ **Be Present:** I understand that the goal of this trip is to grow my relationship and show others who Christ is through who we are, what we do, and what we say. With that, I commit to being present both physically and mentally.
- ☐ **Be Positive:** I commit to maintaining a positive attitude and being flexible when things don't go my way. I commit to not gossiping or spreading negativity through the group, but rather will approach a leader for guidance and counsel. I commit to striving for a Christ-like attitude in all that I do. I will try my best to not complain, murmur, or spread negativity throughout the group.
- ☐ **Don't Be Messing Around:** Messing around includes, but is not limited to: No Drugs, Vaping, Juuls, Alcohol, or Tobacco, or anything of the sort | No Firearms, Fireworks, or Weapons of any kind | No Wrestling or Horseplay | No Guys in the Girls' room | No Girls in the Guys' room | No altering your physical appearance | *No Electronic Devices*
- ☐ **Be Modest:** Girls – No spaghetti straps, short shorts, bare midriff. Guys – no short shorts or tank tops. I commit to never being alone with someone of the opposite gender unless in the open where others can see us.

- ☐ **Clean Up After Yourself:** Don't put things down but put them away. Keep bathroom, meeting room, kitchen clean.
- ☐ **Sacrifice for Others:** I understand that I will be asked to sacrifice for others. I commit to making that sacrifice willingly.
- ☐ **Pursuit of Excellence:** I commit to pursuing excellence in all that I do (Colossians 3:23)
- ☐ **Protect the Team:** I will keep all problems within the confines of the team and commit to working them out in a Biblical manner during Team Time (Matthew 18). I will not stuff but will be honest about my feelings. I will seek out the guidance and help my leaders if need be.
- ☐ **Staying Safe:** I commit to using wisdom and discernment while traveling. I commit to staying with the group. I commit to NOT wandering around and keeping the motto, "safe to be safe" at the forefront of my mind. I understand that I must have a buddy with me at all times and will not wander away from the group alone at any point.
- ☐ **Pursuing Jesus:** I commit to pursuing Jesus and trying to live according to 1 Peter 1:16, "Be holy because I am holy." I recognize I'm not perfect, but I will strive to live like Jesus did.

I know that the point is not to achieve perfection or to be made righteous by my works or actions. However, my goal is to strive to be more like Jesus in all that I think, say and do.

I agree to follow all guidelines and rules in order to take away any distractions that may hinder me from growing in my relationship with God and building a healthy community during my time on the Immersive Experience.

X: _____

Signature

X: _____

Date

X: _____

Print Name

Immersive Experience Jobs

One of the great parts of our Immersive Experience is we get to work together in everything we do. This won't be a trip where any of us are just going to be served, but we will all be serving each other to ensure the trip runs smoothly.

You will be assigned to a specific job (possibly with others), which is your responsibility to complete with excellence during the trip. Below, is each job description. Mark yours.

Job Descriptions

- ☐ **Key-Bearer:** You are in charge of all keys. Whatever vehicle you are assigned to will be the keys you keep track of always. Collect each time you arrive to a destination.
- ☐ **Morning Time with God Lead:** You are in charge of facilitating devotions each morning for the group. You don't need to teach but simply be a leader gathering everyone together, entering the team into this time, and closing out when ready.
- ☐ **Sous Chef:** You are in charge of putting out & cleaning up the breakfast and lunch supplies each morning for everyone (when necessary). You are also in charge of making sure the cooler(s) are packed & ready to go for the day – safely placed in the room or vehicle it belongs in for that day. You'll need to follow all directions from your Chef.
- ☐ **Bell Hop:** You are in charge of making sure all luggage is packed and loaded in the vehicles each time we are traveling. You will need to make sure everyone's luggage is loaded and unloaded safely by the time of departure.

- **Housekeeping:** You and your team are responsible for cleaning up the trash in the vehicles each night. You will have trash bags to discard trash into each evening.
- **Paparazzi:** Your job is to document the trip! You will use the given camera to take pictures of the trip and make sure we get a group picture at some point.
- **Worship:** Your job is to lead our team in Musical Worship each night during our Reflection Time. You will be in charge of 1-3 songs each night depending on our timing.

My job is _____

SAMPLE

Full Name: _____ Date: _____
Email Address: _____

The After Survey

Before your first training you took *The Before Survey* to gain insight for where you were. Now, with trainings, readings, quizzes, and the trip over we want you to survey again to see how far you've come.

Short Answers...

1. Why are you a Christian?

2. List three pieces of evidence, pointing to God's existence.

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. What is truth?

4. Why is the Bible trustworthy and authoritative?

5. In one to two sentences, explain what the gospel is.

Rate Yourself

For the following questions, rate yourself using the following scale:

- 1 = Completely uncomfortable
- 2 = Not very comfortable
- 3 = A bit hesitant
- 4 = Fairly confident
- 5 = Completely comfortable & confident

6. How confident are you that Christianity is true?

1 2 3 4 5

7. How comfortable are you standing up for Christian truth and values with your close friends and family?

1 2 3 4 5

8. How comfortable are you standing up for Christian truth and values in a public setting? For example, at school, at work, on a sports team, in a school club, etc...

1 2 3 4 5

Conversational Survey on Religion & Morality *(Copy 1)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Do you believe in God or a higher power? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- What do you think he, she, or it is like and why?

2. Do you believe objective truth exists? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- How does someone come to know truth?
- Is there objective religious truth? How do we find it?

3. Do you believe there are moral facts (right and wrong) everyone should follow? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?

4. Do you believe in an afterlife? *Yes / No*

- Where do you get your views of the afterlife from?
- (If "yes") What do you think the afterlife is like? Why?

5. Who do you believe Jesus was?

- Where do you get your information about Jesus?

6. What do you think about Christianity?

- Why?
- What has given you this impression?

7. What one question would you like to ask a Christian?

Conversational Survey on Religion & Morality *(Copy 2)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Do you believe in God or a higher power? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- What do you think he, she, or it is like and why?

2. Do you believe objective truth exists? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- How does someone come to know truth?
- Is there objective religious truth? How do we find it?

3. Do you believe there are moral facts (right and wrong) everyone should follow? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?

4. Do you believe in an afterlife? *Yes / No*

- Where do you get your views of the afterlife from?
- (If "yes") What do you think the afterlife is like? Why?

5. Who do you believe Jesus was?

- Where do you get your information about Jesus?

6. What do you think about Christianity?

- Why?
- What has given you this impression?

7. What one question would you like to ask a Christian?

Conversational Survey on Religion & Morality *(Copy 3)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Do you believe in God or a higher power? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- What do you think he, she, or it is like and why?

2. Do you believe objective truth exists? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- How does someone come to know truth?
- Is there objective religious truth? How do we find it?

3. Do you believe there are moral facts (right and wrong) everyone should follow? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?

4. Do you believe in an afterlife? *Yes / No*

- Where do you get your views of the afterlife from?
- (If "yes") What do you think the afterlife is like? Why?

5. Who do you believe Jesus was?

- Where do you get your information about Jesus?

6. What do you think about Christianity?

- Why?
- What has given you this impression?

7. What one question would you like to ask a Christian?

Conversational Survey on Religion & Morality *(Copy 4)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Do you believe in God or a higher power? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- What do you think he, she, or it is like and why?

2. Do you believe objective truth exists? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- How does someone come to know truth?
- Is there objective religious truth? How do we find it?

3. Do you believe there are moral facts (right and wrong) everyone should follow? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?

4. Do you believe in an afterlife? *Yes / No*

- Where do you get your views of the afterlife from?
- (If "yes") What do you think the afterlife is like? Why?

5. Who do you believe Jesus was?

- Where do you get your information about Jesus?

6. What do you think about Christianity?

- Why?
- What has given you this impression?

7. What one question would you like to ask a Christian?

Conversational Survey on Religion & Morality *(Copy 5)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Do you believe in God or a higher power? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- What do you think he, she, or it is like and why?

2. Do you believe objective truth exists? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?
- How does someone come to know truth?
- Is there objective religious truth? How do we find it?

3. Do you believe there are moral facts (right and wrong) everyone should follow? *Yes / No*

- Why or why not?

4. Do you believe in an afterlife? *Yes / No*

- Where do you get your views of the afterlife from?
- (If "yes") What do you think the afterlife is like? Why?

5. Who do you believe Jesus was?

- Where do you get your information about Jesus?

6. What do you think about Christianity?

- Why?
- What has given you this impression?

7. What one question would you like to ask a Christian?

Campus Conversational Survey on Life & Happiness *(Copy 1)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Is there a meaning to life? *Yes / No*
 - If yes, what is it?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where does meaning come from?
 - Is life's meaning merely subjective or is it objective?
2. What is the deepest desire of the human heart?
 - Are there desires of the heart shared by all humans?

3. What is the key to human happiness?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where should people look for an answer to this?
4. Who is the most influential person who has ever lived and why?
5. What are the most serious problems the world is facing?
 - How did you come to that answer?
6. How can we best fix the problems of the world?
 - How do you want to contribute to the solution?
7. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
 - How do you think He would answer?
8. What questions (any) would you ask a Christian?

Campus Conversational Survey on Life & Happiness *(Copy 2)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Is there a meaning to life? *Yes / No*
 - If yes, what is it?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where does meaning come from?
 - Is life's meaning merely subjective or is it objective?
2. What is the deepest desire of the human heart?
 - Are there desires of the heart shared by all humans?

3. What is the key to human happiness?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where should people look for an answer to this?
4. Who is the most influential person who has ever lived and why?
5. What are the most serious problems the world is facing?
 - How did you come to that answer?
6. How can we best fix the problems of the world?
 - How do you want to contribute to the solution?
7. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
 - How do you think He would answer?
8. What questions (any) would you ask a Christian?

Campus Conversational Survey on Life & Happiness *(Copy 3)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Is there a meaning to life? *Yes / No*
 - If yes, what is it?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where does meaning come from?
 - Is life's meaning merely subjective or is it objective?
2. What is the deepest desire of the human heart?
 - Are there desires of the heart shared by all humans?

3. What is the key to human happiness?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where should people look for an answer to this?
4. Who is the most influential person who has ever lived and why?
5. What are the most serious problems the world is facing?
 - How did you come to that answer?
6. How can we best fix the problems of the world?
 - How do you want to contribute to the solution?
7. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
 - How do you think He would answer?
8. What questions (any) would you ask a Christian?

Campus Conversational Survey on Life & Happiness *(Copy 4)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Is there a meaning to life? *Yes / No*
 - If yes, what is it?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where does meaning come from?
 - Is life's meaning merely subjective or is it objective?
2. What is the deepest desire of the human heart?
 - Are there desires of the heart shared by all humans?

3. What is the key to human happiness?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where should people look for an answer to this?
4. Who is the most influential person who has ever lived and why?
5. What are the most serious problems the world is facing?
 - How did you come to that answer?
6. How can we best fix the problems of the world?
 - How do you want to contribute to the solution?
7. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
 - How do you think He would answer?
8. What questions (any) would you ask a Christian?

Campus Conversational Survey on Life & Happiness *(Copy 5)*

Instructions: Make sure you are in groups of two or three. Use this survey to engage with people in enlightening conversations about critical ideas and beliefs.

1. Is there a meaning to life? *Yes / No*
 - If yes, what is it?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where does meaning come from?
 - Is life's meaning merely subjective or is it objective?
2. What is the deepest desire of the human heart?
 - Are there desires of the heart shared by all humans?

3. What is the key to human happiness?
 - How did you come to that answer?
 - Where should people look for an answer to this?
4. Who is the most influential person who has ever lived and why?
5. What are the most serious problems the world is facing?
 - How did you come to that answer?
6. How can we best fix the problems of the world?
 - How do you want to contribute to the solution?
7. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
 - How do you think He would answer?
8. What questions (any) would you ask a Christian?

Campus Prayer Guide

Instructions: Go to the campus you are ministering at and pray over it by using the three steps below...

1. **Read Ephesians 6:10-18:** Let this passage be the guide to your opening prayer.
2. **Travel to Each Building:** Find the buildings listed below, go to them, read the associated verses when you get there, and then spend time in prayer over each field of study.

Campus Buildings

- **Science Building:** Genesis 1:1, Psalm 8, Psalm 104, Isaiah 45:18
 - **Philosophy Building:** Colossians 2:8, Romans 12:2, II Corinthians 10:3-5
 - **Theology Building:** Colossians 2:2-3, Romans 11:33-36
 - **Psychology Building:** Genesis 1:26-27, Psalm 119:13-18
 - **Art Building:** Psalm 27:4, Psalm 50:2, Philippians 4:8
 - **Law Building:** Micah 6:8, Psalm 119:1-24, Romans 2:14-15
3. **Read II Corinthians 10:3-5:** Use this passage to guide your final prayer over the campus, teachers, and students.

Five Helpful Articles

Debating Atheists: By Dan Grossenbach

maventruth.co/articles



Debating Atheists

Introduction (1/5) | By Dan Grossenbach

On November 27, 2016, I debated a local atheist leader, retired podiatrist Dr. Gil Shapiro, the spokesperson of Freethought Arizona.⁸² I've blogged on general post-debate thoughts here but now will cover a series of five consecutive blog posts covering each of the four arguments that the atheist couldn't answer. This is no credit to my debating skills or subject knowledge which are nothing special, but it does show how classic arguments for the Christian worldview can be powerful if we keep it simple. My hope is that this will serve as a good outline to keep in mind when you engage with skeptics in your own community, the water cooler, or the next family dinner table.

By far, the most difficult part of debate prep was planning my general approach. Knowing my opponent helped. In a story by the local paper leading up to the event, the AZ Daily Star quoted Dr. Shapiro saying, "There is the religious view and the secular point of view, and there will be some things we can't move on our position, but there will be **some things that we can.**" In this spirit, I researched claims from renowned atheists and non-Christians and arrived at four aspects of reality we can all agree on even though we may come to different conclusions. They are:

- 1) the arrival of the universe from nothing,
- 2) the arrival of biological information from dead matter,
- 3) the arrival of evil, and
- 4) the arrival of Jesus.

⁸² maventruth.co/FN01

This was a community event between two amateurs, so I had to stick to the basics. As a fulltime detective, I'm not a biblical scholar, scientist, or philosopher so I wasn't going to get fancy. That's why I proffered four facts that enjoy the vast consensus of scholars regardless of religious or non-religious bias. I was also intentional on my topic selection. After all, what could be more pressing for the Christian worldview than creation, sin (evil), and the resurrection? I framed the debate using only commonly accepted facts both Dr. Shapiro and I could, in principle, agree on, and provided an explanation that best fit the facts. If my logic was valid and the facts true, the conclusions I offered would remain standing as the most reasonable. At the end of each of the four separate arguments, I told the audience I would wait to see what my opponent would offer as a better explanation of these facts. In his rebuttals, he gave a lot of criticisms but never answered my challenges directly. Not only was my opponent silent in presenting an alternative explanation for any of these four facts, he didn't offer any explanation at all. So, if the challenges I presented demand an explanation, the Christian explanation won by default.

Christianity won because the evidence was better and the reasoning clearer than what my atheist friend offered. We all know that debates are won or lost by much more than the content. If I came across condescending or frustrated, all the evidence and logic in the world wouldn't have helped me. Good manners and graciousness are critical. My goal was to be bold and nice at the same time. While his arguments were lacking, I owe thanks to Dr. Shapiro for keeping things cordial as well. He's a gentleman.

A quick note about scholarly consensus is important. Few of us have the time or training to master all the arguments so it helps to stand on the shoulders of scholars who do. I'm not

suggesting an appeal to authority or majority can replace sound reasoning. Surely, scholarly consensus alone isn't an argument. It would be fallacious to appeal to the majority since the majority can be wrong and the number of noses is irrelevant to the truth of a proposition. What this shows is that each fact has been defended in published work and debated among experts on all sides of the issue. When scholars committed to a worldview contrary to Christianity concede these facts, they do so in spite of their desires because of the weight of evidence and because intellectual honesty compels them. That's what we want it to do for our unbelieving friends as well. We just need to point this out.

To show how this works, I'll release four short blog posts [the next 4 articles] to unpack each of these facts over each of the next four weeks. When combined together, these four facts make a cumulative, or "minimal facts," case we can use to show our skeptical friends to infer important conclusions that point us to God based on facts even atheists grant. Inspired by what Gary Habermas has done for the historical case for the resurrection, these facts can be extended into an overall case for Christianity. The compelling force of Habermas' work is showing the mass concession by scholars from non-Christian, even hostile, worldviews on relevant facts surrounding the death of Jesus. It's easy to point out Christian scholars in support of our views, and there's nothing wrong with that, but citing a skeptic who is an authority on the topic blunts the bias objection from the start.

It's not only skeptics who need to hear this. When I speak at various Christian groups, I'm constantly surprised by how many intelligent and faithful Christians don't know how widely accepted these facts are either. Without the facts, they risk being forced into defending ideas already settled among the experts. To suggest that Jesus died by crucifixion, for example,

might sound like a *religious* claim, not a *historical* one. Once we learn that the most skeptical scholars accept Jesus' crucifixion, however, it should cause our skeptical friend to question her own reasons for denying it. Many of the scholars I'll cite are the same ones our skeptical friends are learning from. So, if our friends are persuaded by atheist writings of Dawkins, Shermer, Hitchens, Krauss, Erhman, Carrier, and others, get ready to hear what they have to say now!

SAMPLE

Debating Atheists

Arrival of the Universe (2/5) By Dan Grossenbach

In the previous post of this short blog series [article 1], I explained how four facts agreed upon by the majority of non-Christian experts can be used to build a strong case for Christianity. This is the approach I took when I debated Freethought Arizona spokesperson Dr. Gil Shapiro in November 2016. In this week's post, I'll cover the first one.

#1 The Arrival of the Universe

Either the universe is infinitely old, or it started at a finite time ago at a certain point in time. There's no third option unless we deny the existence of the universe altogether as some new age or eastern beliefs do. The cosmos has been the focus of study as long as man has existed, and some mysteries remain yet unsolved. Nevertheless, that the universe had a beginning is something we can say with relative certainty.

1. About 13.8 bya the universe came into existence where energy, matter, natural laws, time, and space arrived on the scene prior to which they were not there. ASU astrophysicist and religion critic Paul Davies says "the universe can't have existed forever. We know there must be an absolute beginning a finite time ago."⁸³

Alexander Vilenkin, another skeptic of religion goes further arguing for a finite starting point even with the possibility of multiple universes when he said this in 2003:

⁸³ Paul Davies, "The Big Bang-and Before," lecture at Thomas Aquinas College March 2002 quoted from ReasonableFaith.org.

It is said that an argument is what convinces a reasonable man, but a proof even an unreasonable man. With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape: they must face the *problem* of a cosmic beginning.

The problem for Vilenkin and his non-Christian peers is what follows from a "beginning."⁸⁴

In defense of this idea, outspoken religion skeptic and Arizona State University physicist Lawrence Krause said, "If you asked me what I would bet, I would bet that our universe had a beginning."⁸⁵ To see why scientists like Davies, Krause, and other skeptics consider the beginning of the universe a problem, it's important to see what follows from another fact we already know.

2. In uniform and repeated human experience, everything that begins to exist has a cause.

Sensing the pending consequences of these two facts, Dr. Krause tries to show how events can occur from "nothing." The trouble is, he defines nothing as something. You can see Krause first properly defines "nothing" as the "absence of anything" but in the very next breath tells us his "nothing" of the pre-beginning initial conditions of the universe contained something, namely, lots of complex "stuff" and "particles" interacting with each other.⁸⁶ Dr. Krause is a brilliant man and must know better. For the stuff and particles, he just listed by

⁸⁴ Alexander Vilenkin, *Many Worlds in One* p176, quoted from Common Sense Atheism blog post "Craig on Vilenkin on Cosmic Origins" by Luke Muehlhauser

⁸⁵ Paul Davies, "The Big Bang-and Before," lecture at Thomas Aquinas College, March 2002 quoted from ReasonableFaith.org

⁸⁶ Lawrence Krause, debate with William Lane Craig in Brisbane, Australia on August 7, 2013 transcript here

default entails space, time, energy, matter, and abstract objects like physical laws and logic which is all that's needed to make up our entire physical universe. These things are not only not "nothing" (no-thing) but are the very things scientists tell us did NOT exist until they came into being at the beginning of the universe, a beginning Dr. Krause would put his money on. In fact, the universe itself is comprised of the same things he attributes to as "nothing." So, for Krause: nothing = universe.

If these first two points hold true, as nearly all experts agree, and the logic is sound, the following conclusion is inescapable.

3. The universe had a cause.

This opens a whole other can of worms. Who or what is the cause? Well, we can infer a few things from this argument. The cause must be supernatural, uncaused, spaceless, immaterial, timeless, personal, powerful, rational, and independent. This list of attributes rules out nearly every world religion except monotheism.

- **Uncaused** – Gen 1:1, Ps 102:25-27, Jn 1:3, 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2
- **Spaceless** – 1 Kings 8:27, Isa 66:1-2, Acts 7:48
- **Immaterial** – 1 Kings 8:27, Isa 66:1-2, Acts 7:48
- **Timeless** – Ps 90:2, Job 36:26, Rev 1:8, Jn 8:58
- **Personal** – Gen 17:1, Rev 19:6, Ps 33:9, Rom 4:17
- **Powerful** – Gen 18:14, Jer 32:17, Job 42:1-2, Mt 19:26, Mk 14:26
- **Rational** – 1 Cor 14:33, Isa 1:18, 2 Tim 2:13, Lk 10:27
- **Independent** – Gen 1:1, Ps 102:25-27, Jn 1:3, 1 Cor 8:6, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2

We're not able to show the God of Christianity on this first argument alone, but there's no better candidate than theism to fit the bill. At the very least, the God of biblical Christianity matches this description without a single miss and is among a very short list of contenders. It's important to note none of the rival atheistic theories fit these attributes for the universe's initial cause. But before critiquing any rival options, I waited for Dr. Shapiro to present another cause that better explains the creation of the universe. He never did. And the options offered by the atheists mentioned here start off on false or unfounded assumptions. Atheists might not like the Christian explanation, but they seem to support the basis for it and fail to offer a better way. So, the Biblical account of the arrival of the universe remains the best explanation available to us.

Debating Atheists

Arrival of Biological Information (3/5) | By Dan Grossenbach

Fact #2: The Arrival of Biological Information

Information embedded inside all of life demands an explanation. Virtually all agree that, at some point in earth's early history, the first living being came about from non-living (dead) material. Setting aside for the moment the incredible principle of life arising from death, what we find inside of life gives us the greatest mystery of all. The information inside of life is exactly what we see in high tech computer engineering. It's remarkably designed. Bestselling atheist writer and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins remarks on information in every cell this way:

The machine code of the genes is uncannily computer-like. Apart from differences in jargon, the pages of a molecular biology journal might be interchanged with those of a computer engineering journal.⁸⁷

So, the argument goes like this...

1. All life requires DNA/RNA.

Citing Richard Dawkins, "DNA code is universal among all living things"⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*, New York: Basic Books/Harper Collins, 1995., p17

⁸⁸ This fact is so widely assumed it was hard to find a direct quote. Richard Dawkins cited in a news article - maventruth.co/FN07

2. DNA/RNA is information

What is information? By information, I mean the specification of the amino acid sequence in protein...Information means here the precise determination of sequence, either of bases of the [nucleic] acid or in amino acid residue in the protein.

Christian skeptic and co-discoverer of the DNA structure, Francis Crick: "Genes are information...a code...in sequence...just like what a computer programmer would do!"⁸⁹

Information requires a mind

In his debate with Christian apologist David Wood last year, leading atheist and editor of Skeptic Magazine Michael Shermer explains it this way:

Is there some advanced intelligence, a designer, call it whatever you want? Maybe. How do we know? Our methodology is actually pretty good for finding out...[Y]ou know the SETI program has algorithms. They grind through lots of signals coming from space to determine if it's random noise or if it's a signal.⁹⁰

Shermer concedes that information implies an intelligent cause and even offers a way to verify it. Ironically, his method is the very same one offered by the ID advocates he's trying to refute.

Therefore, life required a mind.

⁸⁹ Richard Dawkins interview starting at 1:25 - maventruth.co/FNO8

⁹⁰ Michael Shermer vs. David Wood debate on "Does God Exist" October 10, 2016, Kennesaw State University

This is why religion critics like Francis Crick⁹¹, Richard Dawkins⁹² and others propose the rarely accepted view of panspermia, or the idea that intelligent alien life seeded the early earth at just the right time for life to take root. In fact, there's little discussed about origin of life at all. Normally, the question skips the origin of life issue and goes right into the evolution mechanism. Like all facts which lead us to conclusions we don't like, it's much easier to simply ignore the problem.

The arrival of biological information is an area evolutionary biologists around the world are dealing with. In Nov 2016, scientists from around the world met in London to discuss how the neo-Darwinian mechanism fails to account for the complexity of life. Recordings of the lectures will be provided on the Royal Society website⁹³ soon. What's more, is that the issue of information already in the cell before the first organism ever existed is not even a matter of evolution at all.

The reason I presented this as evidence for God is the same reason atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel and former atheist Antony Flew saw purpose and design in biological life. Every living cell requires something that is so particular that it cannot, in principle, be attributed to chance or natural causes. The DNA molecule contains not only complexity – for it has that. The complexity must also be arranged in such a way that it performs a specific function for the development of a living organism.

The specific complexity of this program is exactly like computer software. In fact, the four fundamental nucleotide base chemicals comprising the DNA molecule strands are not

⁹¹ Francis Crick, directed panspermia 1972, - maventruth.co/FN10

⁹² Richard Dawkins at the end of "Expelled" - maventruth.co/FN11

⁹³ maventruth.co/FN12

only similar to a computer program but they are the exact same thing. The pioneer of modern software, Bill Gates, and no friend to Christianity, recognized this when he said, "DNA is like a computer program but far, far more advanced than any software ever created."⁹⁴

The four chemicals abbreviated A-C-G-T are a four character code much like the binary two character code of human developed software consists of particularly placed zeros and ones. The only difference, is that whereas a slight computer code error typically results in a minor disfunction, any deviation from the DNA sequence most likely terminates the organism and any future descendants.

This poses major problems for the Neo-Darwinist theory of random mutation but that's beyond our immediate scope. Lest anyone be tempted to think time and chance under natural laws can produce such a function-based information code, atheist paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould shows that time is not available to us:

[W]e are left with very little time between the development of suitable conditions for life on the earth's surface and the origin of life. Life is not a complex accident that required immense time to convert the vastly improbable into the nearly certain. Instead, life, for all its intricacy, probably arose rapidly about as soon as it could.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Bill Gates, *The Road Ahead* p228

⁹⁵ Stephen Jay Gould, "An Early Start," *Natural History*, February, 1978.

Richard Dawkins goes further by ruling out chance a priori:

However many ways there may be of being alive, it is certain that there are vastly more ways of being dead, or rather, not alive. You may throw cells together at random, over and over again for a billion years, and not once will you get a conglomeration that flies or swims or burrows or runs, or does anything, even badly, that could remotely be construed as working to keep itself alive.⁹⁶

Not only was there no time for the DNA/RNA to develop naturally, there was also no known natural mechanism for it to do so.

Atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel agrees:

The more details we learn about the chemical basis of life and the intricacy of the genetic code, the more unbelievable the standard historical account [neo-Darwinian evolution] becomes.⁹⁷

It is *prima facie* highly implausible that life as we know it is the result of a sequence of physical accidents together with the mechanism of natural selection.⁹⁸

Further:

I realize that such doubts will strike many people as outrageous, but that is because almost everyone in our secular culture has been browbeaten into regarding the reductive research program as sacrosanct on the ground that anything else would not be science.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design 1988, p9 The immediate relevance to this was pointed out to me by Douglas Axe.

⁹⁷ Nagel, Thomas (2012). *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p5

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p5

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p7

And finally:

I believe the defenders of ID deserve our gratitude for challenging a scientific world view that owes some of the passion displayed by its adherents precisely to the fact that it is thought to liberate us from religion.¹⁰⁰

Whenever information is found, in uniform and repeated human experience, it's been the product of an intelligent mind. I left it to Dr. Shapiro to provide at least one piece of evidence to the contrary. He didn't.

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¹⁰⁰ Nagel, Thomas (2012). *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p12

Debating Atheists

Arrival of Evil (4/5) | By Dan Grossenbach

Understanding evil reveals an important part of reality. As much as we try to avoid it, evil is part of the universal human condition – something theists and atheists both have in common. You may be surprised, however; that the way atheists think about evil actually shows God exists. For the previous post on [article 3], atheist arguments for the Arrival of Biological Information. Unlike other points in this series so far, probing evil touches the heart. It gets emotional. The argument I'm presenting, by contrast, isn't designed to address the emotional part of the problem. There are volumes dedicated to that. Rather, the point here is to reason through three facts about evil that nearly all people agree on and to see what follows:

1. Evil exists.

This fact is so obvious that even the argument of evil used against God relies on it. Readers have probably heard the "problem of evil" used as a critique against theism. This was something I knew Dr. Shapiro would bring up in our debate, since he brought it up in a prior encounter, so I decided to hit it head on. As expected, Dr. Shapiro parroted the classic criticism from 4th century BC philosopher Epicurus:

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Classic argument for the "problem of evil" first attributed in this form to the Greek philosopher Epicurus

The question puts God in a dilemma. Either he's not all powerful (he can't stop evil) or not all good (he's unwilling to stop it). Theists believe God is both all-powerful and all-good and thus, find themselves having to eliminate one. I address this later. What we must consider at present; however, is that the objector assumes the existence of evil prior to the objection. This is a huge assumption. Epicurus posed a fair question to the Greek polytheists of his day but is it fair to carry this over to God of the Bible? I'll address that later. The immediate question is whether or not evil exists at all and this objection only works if it does. Put simply, if there's a "problem" of evil, then evil exists.

Seeing the plain consequences of this fact, skeptics typically fall into two groups: 1) ground goodness on something other than God, or 2) deny good or evil exist at all.

The first group accepts value propositions as something real (good and evil exist) but tries to avoid God. Freedom from Religion founder and president Dan Barker says "'Good' is that which enhances life, and 'evil' is that which threatens it."¹⁰²

Sam Harris defines morality as the "right and wrong answers to the question of how to maximize human flourishing in any moment."¹⁰³ In my debate with Dr. Shapiro, he repeated the secular humanist doctrine that value relates to the standard of universal "well-being."

The careful reader may see that they shifted the meaning of good. Rather than *goodness* defined as ultimate moral perfection, they see it as the best way to accomplish a goal. Plenty could be said about this shift, but it doesn't really matter for this part of my argument. Whether they ground

¹⁰² Dan Barker, *Losing Faith in Faith*, page 125

¹⁰³ Sam Harris, bases his moral standard on what he deems human flourishing, - maventruth.co/FN22

goodness in human flourishing or not, they still have an objective standard. They don't put it on God, but instead on something else of objective and universal value. Sam Harris urges, "we need some universal conception of right and wrong."¹⁰⁴ So, despite this shift in definition, they find themselves in the same place in terms of establishing objective goodness. For this purpose, we can join together in agreement with atheists who agree objective goodness exists, right?

Not so fast! Other well-known atheists dismiss value altogether. In Darwinian naturalism, there is no way things are supposed to be. Dawkins puts this best:

In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.¹⁰⁵

An abstract from Cornell University scientist William Provine's second annual Darwin Day speech starts off this way: "Naturalistic evolution has clear consequences that Charles Darwin understood perfectly" One of those consequences, he suggests, is that "no ultimate foundation for ethics exists."¹⁰⁶ If moral values aren't real, this disrupts my first premise. There are plenty of reasons to reject the idea that moral values are

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: The Darwinian View of Life*, Basic Books, 1995, p133

¹⁰⁶ William Provine, "Evolution: Free will and punishment and meaning in life" [abstract] from speech given at the Second Annual Darwin Day Celebration, University of Tennessee – Knoxville on Feb. 12, 1998 - maventruth.co/FN25

a convenient social construct, but it's important to show where this takes us if it were so.

It turns out the denial of moral value just exchanges one problem for another. If the atheists who deny evil are right, then the problem of evil goes out with it. If there's no evil, there's nothing to complain about. Saying there's no evil is different than living that way, however. For most people, this isn't as far as most are willing to go. Our gut-wrenching feelings on the inside and our outward actions tell us that everyone knows evil exists. In fact, even atheists arguing this objection often find themselves blaming God for the evil they just told us doesn't exist. While the denial of evil may be something popular writers do, those dedicated to clear thinking on this issue have come to a much different conclusion. They know objective value is only possible with God.

The philosopher who put this most poetically was one of the greatest thinkers of the 19th century who also happened to be an ardent atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche vividly illustrates the absurdity of a moral laden world without God in this passage from *The Joyful Wisdom*.

Where is God gone?!" he called out. "I mean to tell you! *We have killed him*, – you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become

colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? – for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!¹⁰⁷

In our own time, atheist philosopher of science Michael Ruse puts it this way, "The position of the modern evolutionist . . . is that humans have an awareness of morality . . . because such an awareness is of biological worth. Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' they think they are referring above and beyond themselves Nevertheless, . . . such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction, . . . and any deeper meaning is illusory."¹⁰⁸

The late atheist Christopher Hitchens conceded that it "could be true, yes. That could well be true," that morality is a by-product of social evolution without any objective foundation.¹⁰⁹ He adds, "one wants to think their love for their fellow creature means more than that." No Christopher, they don't merely *want* to think it, they actually *do* think it and for good reason.

Nietzsche, Ruse, Hitchens, and other like-minded atheists may not believe in God and many despise him. However, they know that without him, they're posed with another problem

¹⁰⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom* - maventruth.co/FN26

¹⁰⁸ Michael Ruse, "Evolutionary Theory and Christian Ethics," in *The Darwinian Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 262, 268-269

¹⁰⁹ Hitchens vs. Craig debate "Does God Exist," Biola University (La Mirada, CA), April 4, 2009, at approximately 1:25 - maventruth.co/FN28

worse than the first. Namely, they are unable to account for the kinds of evil that we all know are real. Worse, they deny the very evil that atheists typically point to as evidence against God. This argument turns the challenge on its head. We can only make sense of evil if God exists.

In my recent debate, my secular humanist opponent didn't seem to grasp this. Instead, he doubled down. Dr. Shapiro indicted God for allowing things he described as real examples of evil. The irony here was that he was proving my point. If Shapiro is right that there are real unjustified evils that God was allowing, he's granting that the first premise above. It's as if he wants to argue "God exists and he's really bad so he can't exist!" He can't have it both ways. Take it from the atheists, either evil exists, or we need to act like it does.

So, which is it? Do moral values exist in something other than God or are they useful illusions? We've seen how Darwinian naturalism leads to a world without value. On the other side, we've seen God's critics condemn his acts as evil in no uncertain terms. We've also seen that a world devoid of evil can't condemn God for something that doesn't exist. If true, advocates of this view don't point us to God nor do they challenge him, essentially making evil a non-issue. Those who blame God for real evil agree with us on this first point, but how far will they go?

2. Evil entails objective good.

By objective good, I mean absolute moral perfection by which all things of value are measured. Evil isn't really a thing at all. Rather, it's the absence of something – namely, something good. Just as darkness isn't anything on its own without light (dark = the lack of light rays), evil only comes about when something good is taken away. For Harris, Barker, and Shapiro evil is when human well-being doesn't go the way it should.

Whether we base value on God or our own idea of human flourishing, evil is when something goes wrong. It's not the way things are supposed to be. This only makes sense if there's a right way for things to be. Next, we see what kinds of things come with objective goodness.

3. Objective good must transcend, precede, hold accountable, and value humanity.

Transcending: First, goodness entails a moral authority which crosses all times, places, and cultures. People groups can't make up their own values. Instead, value applies to all people regardless of what anyone thinks about it. That's what philosophers mean by "mind-independent." The Nazis can't be just in doing what they did no matter how many people agreed with it. Instead, goodness must extend beyond the individual mind or community consensus in order to be the standard by which ALL people and cultures are compared. The value inherent in objective goodness must transcend humanity in this way.

Preceding: Second, goodness cannot have been invented by the first humans. After all, any values established by man can be later undone by men. It would be absurd to think the first humans could come up with whatever value system they wanted because they were first on the scene. It doesn't take much effort to see the advantage of having lying or stealing as virtues. No, that isn't an option available to us. Goodness wasn't invented. It was already there.

Holding Accountable: Third, there is no objective goodness if evil goes unpunished. As my friend Frank Turek puts it, where there's no justice, there's no injustice. When people are allowed to do bad things without any consequences, there is no justice. Objective goodness demands justice. But there's

not always justice in this world. The murderers of black teenager Emmet Till in the 1950's rural Mississippi never faced trial. The murderer of 6 year-old Adam Walsh admitted the killing but was never charged. While in his 70's, Joseph Stalin had already killed about 50 million people (not including war casualties) and continued his genocidal orders from his deathbed in a Moscow mansion. In a purely natural world with no accountability for all people, there's no justice for all people. If there's no justice for all people, there's no justice at all. If that's not good, then goodness must include universal human accountability.

Value Giving: Fourth, objective goodness must include the intrinsic value inherent in all human life. By intrinsic, I mean they all have equal worth just for being part of the species and not for any act, experience, or attribute they have or lack. It would make no sense to violate the rights of a human being if they aren't valued in the first place. Evil and suffering experienced by humans only makes sense if the species has worth beyond itself and that their value is an objective fact of reality.

4. Therefore, since evil exists, there is a transcendent, authoritative, human valuing source of objective goodness

Biblical Christianity's explanation offers a solution that perfectly fits these facts:

- *God transcends humanity* – Job 12:10, Acts 17:25, 28, Col 1:17, Heb 1:3, Eph 4:6
- *God precedes humanity* – Gen 1-2, Ps 90:2, Job 36:26, Rev 1:8, Jn 8:58

- ***God holds humanity accountable*** – Gen 3:24, Amos 9:1-4, Mt 6:20, 1 Pet 4:4-5, 2 Pet 3:9, Mt 25, Mk 9:43, Rev 14:9-11, 20:10
- ***God values humanity*** – Gen 1:27, Ps 16:11, 73:25-26, Isa 62:5, Zep 3:17-18, Jn 3:16, Eph 5:23-32, 1 Jn 4:19
- ***God is objective goodness*** – Gen 1:31, Ps 100:5, Lk 18:19, Rom 12:2, 1 Thes 5:18, 1 Jn 4:8

As I said in the beginning of this post, it's hard to separate emotion from logic when reflecting seriously on evil. This was a tough one to cover. On stage during the live debate, I had three examples of human suffering in my slide show but by the third one I lost my composure and had to skip it. I know I was being overly emotional in my appeal, but my unexpected emotional response just emphasized the point. Evil exists and deep down we all know it. Christianity might not be what people like, but it provides the best explanation. Dr. Shapiro didn't think so, but he missed the point entirely. This was most evident during the Q&A when he said "I want to clear up something really fast. Christians always say if you don't believe in God you can't say anything about morality. That's nonsense!"

Nobody ever argued this and Dr. Shapiro is smart enough to know better. The point he ignored that there is no objective basis to ground moral values under atheism. I've had the chance to meet with Dr. Shapiro since our debate and learned he considers all morality as relative. So, even when he grants the horrid act of abusing babies as *objectively* wrong, he still considers it relative.

Strangely, Dr. Shapiro seems to embrace moral realism when he condemns God's actions, or his failures to act. Shapiro can't allow for any moral values as real and mind independent

since it makes no sense under atheistic naturalism. In other words, Dr. Shapiro might argue like this: Since God doesn't exist, there are no moral values outside of the human mind. Since there are no values outside human minds, all morality is relative.

The trouble is, I don't think Dr. Shapiro has followed the logic as far as it goes. As Dr. Shapiro said in his opening speech "It just is what it is." At bottom, the universe has no meaning or purpose outside of humanity, he said.

Christianity does offer it. It offers a basis for grounding value in the universe, a value of humanity and holding people accountable. Dr. Shapiro didn't understand the point and furthered the case for Christianity every time he complained about evil. It's ironic, actually. The very person he blamed for evil – God – is the one we can see much more clearly in contrast to the evil we all know exists. The intellectual dishonesty really showed in the inconsistent demand Shapiro and questioners put on Christianity. They tolerated, even celebrated ignorance on origins of cosmos or biology but demanded to know why God allowed evil. Even if they could ground evil in something transcendent and authoritative, why not find ignorance on that just as "refreshing?" It gets worse.

This brings us to an important rule: the one who bears the burden of proof is the one who makes the claim. It wasn't my burden to refute my opponent's unsupported assertions, but they are his to defend. I had to provide support for my position, but so did he. No one gets a free pass here.

Dr. Shapiro is fully within his rights to criticize my ideas, but he must do more than rely on emotional reaction and make a compelling case for his view. He gave no case so there was nothing to address. That's why I pointed out to the audience that Dr. Shapiro depended on a "shock" factor in the absence

of sound argument. In addition to pointing out this fallacy, I gave three points that Dr. Shapiro needed to defend for the Epicurean dilemma mentioned at the top of this post:

- God has no moral authority to do as he sees fit with his creation.
- God has no justification to accomplish a greater good (and we have enough knowledge to determine this).
- God could have done otherwise to accomplish a better result.

Even after pointing this out during my rebuttal speech, Dr. Shapiro still failed to provide any good reasons to believe these three hidden assumptions implicit in his complaint about God. Instead of arguing it, the appeal was to the heart, "How could a good God allow this?!"

As in the other points I made, I invited Dr. Shapiro to present an alternative explanation for evil. Since he didn't do that, the offer presented consistent with Christian theism remained the best explanation offered that day.

Theism offers the best explanation, but it does more. It is so obvious that there are things wrong with this world, that the burden falls on those who deny it. Sitting on a comfy couch with my wife talking about our day is all it takes to bring this reality home. As a federal agent and a nurse, the common question "How was your day, honey?" makes this evident daily. Regardless of where you are in life, I'm sure this could be true for you too.

Christian theism not only explains evil in our world, but it's the only one worldview offers a satisfying solution to it. The same God of the Bible whose perfect nature sets the standard for value also offers mercy to people who have violated it. In perfect justice, the crimes against him are paid in full by the

only one who can bear it, the God-man Jesus of Nazareth. Clearly, this is something that atheists won't grant. But you would be surprised what they do say about him. The question of Jesus will take us to the fourth and final point in this short series.

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Debating Atheists

Arrival of Jesus (5/5) | By Dan Grossenbach

#4 The Arrival of Jesus

Ancient history is a funny thing. We depend on the information, but no one was there to see it. Historians meet this challenge with the standard method of historiography.

Historiography is scientific in a sense, albeit different than the hard sciences like physics and chemistry. In both cases, absolute certainty still evades us. Historians seek only to identify what events are more likely than not to have happened. Famous religion skeptic Bart Ehrman says human events that occurred in the past are always a matter of what probably did or did not happen.¹¹⁰

History's witnesses contain lore and exaggeration but also facts. It's inherently problematic that there's much about the ancient world we'll never know. In fact, an overwhelming majority of events and people left without a trace. When it comes to Jesus of Nazareth, however; there's little else we can know so well.

Surprised? It turns out there are a few facts about his life, death, and post-death events that aren't even contested among historians today. So, it's safe to say we can know with relative historical certainty that these things actually happened. Don't take our word for it, but see what the scholars who reject Christianity say about him.

¹¹⁰ Bart Ehrman quoted in *How to Defend the Christian Faith: Advice from an Atheist* By John W. Loftus, Peter Boghossian viewed in Google Books preview

Jesus died by Roman crucifixion in first century Palestine

"Jesus' death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable."
– Atheist Gerd Ludemann¹¹¹

"The crucifixion of Jesus by the Romans is one of the most secure facts we have about his life." – Atheist Bart Ehrman¹¹²

We can take it "absolutely for granted that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate" Skeptic John Dominic Crossan¹¹³

Jewish scholar Paula Fredrickson tells us "the crucifixion is the single strongest fact we have about Jesus."¹¹⁴

Even the radical and anti-supernatural Jesus Seminar claims that the crucifixion is "one indisputable fact."¹¹⁵ Finally, New Testament scholar Marcus Borg articulates for us:

[S]ome judgments are so probable as to be certain; for example, Jesus really existed, and he really was crucified, just as Julius Caesar really existed and was assassinated. We can in fact know as much about Jesus as we can about any figure in the ancient world.¹¹⁶

With such strong endorsement by non-Christian scholars who may otherwise be inclined to dismiss this fact, it seems as though no one would oppose it. Nonetheless, there are a few who do. Muslims, of course, are theologically committed to

¹¹¹ Gerd Ludemann, 2004. The Resurrection of Christ. p50 quoted by James Bishop

¹¹² Bart Ehrman - maventruth.co/FN31

¹¹³ John Dominic Crossan quoted by R. Stewart & Gary Habermas in Memories of Jesus. p282 quoted by James Bishop

¹¹⁴ Paula Frederickson, remark during discussion at the meeting of "The Historical Jesus" section at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 22, 1999 as cited at ReasonableFaith.org

¹¹⁵ Robert Funk, Jesus Seminar videotape as cited by James Bishop

¹¹⁶ Marcus Borg, 1999. The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions. Chapter 5: Why was Jesus killed? as cited by James Bishop

reject this fact at the outset. There are also a handful of scholars who argue the crucifixion was an allegorical story based on pagan mythology. An excellent rebuttal to this view by Greg Koukl can be found [here](#).¹¹⁷ The interested reader is encouraged to look into the reasons these scholars have for or against all three of these facts about Jesus.¹¹⁸

The point of this article is to show basic facts most non-Christian scholars concede to when everything is considered. Surprising as it may be, non-Christian scholars accept most of Paul's letters and much of the gospel narrative as authentic. Honest historians apply the same standard to the New Testament as they give other available textual witnesses. Almost all scholars give credit to Paul for at least 7 of his 12 letters which give us more than enough for all three points in this post by itself.

Even non-Christian historians don't dismiss the gospels which provide independent and early accounts. It's important to realize the passion narratives that provide an account of the crucifixion have distinct differences even among the "synoptic" gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). This indicates the written narrative comes from a unique prior source even when other parts of the gospels may share a common tradition. Additionally, the crucifixion is presumed as historical in non-canonical material such as the Shepherd of Hermas and two letters of Clement, Gnostic texts, and the writings of early church fathers.

Contemporary non-Christian sources help too. Admittedly, some Christian apologists have overstated ancient witnesses that mention Christ, but others have dismissed them too

¹¹⁷ Greg Koukl, Jesus Recycled Redeemer, Solid Ground, September 1, 2009 – maventruth.co/FN36

¹¹⁸ A great resource on the most current peer-reviewed literature on the topic is by Micheal R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, IVP Academic, 2010

quickly (the latter possibly due to the former). At the very least, the extant material left from ancient writers who mentioned Jesus relayed what they took to be contemporary common knowledge. Non-Christians Tacitus, Lucian, Mara Bar Serapion, and Josephus each have different reasons for mentioning Jesus of Nazareth, but they all assume his execution to be a fact taken for granted by their first century audience. It is also worth noting that ancient writings of the time confirm specific crucifixion details described in the gospels and no ancient source contradict this was Jesus' fate.¹¹⁹

Once again, this point can be made by those who we would expect to disagree. Mike Licona points out that Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide in his work titled, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, gives a case that the post-resurrection appearances in the New Testament originate from the apostles themselves.¹²⁰

Atheist New Testament scholar Gerd Ludemann thinks the appearance narratives were so well attested that Paul cited them to support his argument. Commenting on the famous appearance narrative in 1 Cor 15, Ludemann thinks Paul referenced the 500 witnesses to encourage his audience to go interview them.¹²¹ Skeptic Robert Funk reports the findings of the hypercritical "Jesus Seminar" who believe the 500 witnesses actually had an appearance, albeit a visionary one.¹²² From this and many other passages, we know that the followers sincerely believed Jesus appeared to them both individually and in group settings – both to disciples who knew him well and those who did not – both to friend and to

¹¹⁹ Micheal R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, IVP Academic, 2010, pp303-318

¹²⁰ *ibid*, pp323-324 – citing Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, 2002, p99

¹²¹ Gerd Ludemann, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*, 2004, p41

¹²² Licona (2010), p321 – citing Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998)

foe alike. The accounts are so well attested one scholar who even proposes the idea that Jesus never existed concedes this point (yes, you read that right). The skeptic Richard Carrier puts it this way..." Obviously, I also agree there were appearances, but I argue the appearances were hallucinations."¹²³

Here Carrier supports the most common critical view in contrast to the resurrection hypothesis. His biased approach of methodological naturalism rules out the existence of God thereby excluding the resurrection option from the start. He's so committed to avoid the resurrection that he proposes contradictory theories and admits he doesn't intend to provide a plausible alternative theory – only something that's possible. In his view (akin to Hume and Ehrman), miracles are the least probable event regardless of the evidence, so any alternative to the resurrection is more likely. The implicit assumption is this: since God isn't an option, anything else will work better. He can then lob spaghetti at the wall and take whatever sticks because he took the supernatural noodles out before the toss.

Hostile skeptics Paul and James changed from hostile critics to teach the resurrection as their central message and lived an increasingly hostile life of suffering and ultimately faced a violent death for it.

James:

Admittedly the weaker of the "minimal facts" gleaned from his exhaustive study, Dr. Gary Habermas cites the conversion of James as a fact supported by the writings of a majority of scholars who are published on the topic in English, French, or German since 1975. In his book co-authored by Mike Licona, he lists four reasons given by the skeptics:

¹²³ Richard Carrier, March 18, 2009, Missouri State University debate with William Lane Craig at approximately 47 min 23 sec - maventruth.co/FN42

- James rejected Jesus' ministry (Mk 3:21, 31; 6:3-4; John 7:5)
- 1 Cor 15:3-7 believed by skeptics to be authentic lists James as a witness to the risen Jesus
- James becomes a Christian leader (Acts 15:12-21; Gal 1:19)
- James died as a martyr for being a Christian leader (Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria)¹²⁴

Flavius Josephus was a contemporary to both James and Paul and was a Jewish historian financed by the Roman Emperor. His familial heritage was of Jewish elite in the capital city of Jerusalem where he lived while these events were unfolding. If anyone would have known about the early Christian movement, Josephus would. So, what he says about James the Just, the brother of Jesus of Nazareth and leader of the Jerusalem church carries some weight:

Having such a character, Ananias thought that with Festus dead and Albinus still on the way, he would have the proper opportunity. Convening the judges of the Sanhedrin, he brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, whose name was James, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned.¹²⁵

The testimony of James is affirmed by Christian and non-Christian sources alike.

¹²⁴ Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, (2004) Kregel. Grand Rapids, MI. p68

¹²⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:200

Paul:

The fact that Paul was a skeptic who converted to Christianity is so uncontroversial that we can take it directly from the source, Paul himself. There's no need to do otherwise since the non-Christian scholars endorse his authorship to his testimony. According to skeptic John Dominic Crossan, Paul's personal testimony exceeds even the events recorded in Acts.¹²⁶ Paul writes of his personal conversion experience in Galatians, 1 Cor, Philemon, and 1 Timothy. It's also accounted for in a separate source on two different occasions in the book of Acts, which ironically, is also the book that most vividly speaks of his prior violent opposition. Virtually no scholar goes against the overwhelming majority consensus that Paul once was a skeptic who became a believer. Given the drastic shift in position, that is a tremendous understatement. Even atheist philosopher Michael Martin has concluded this.¹²⁷

Conclusion:

In closing, let's review what we can know from these facts that non-Christians support: 1) Jesus was crucified, 2) apostles had post-resurrection appearances, and 3) hostile critics Paul and James converted. Which explanation best accounts for these three facts? Skeptics have offered a range of theories, but far and away, the most common naturalistic explanation offered is grief hallucinations. This is the most common way to avoid a supernatural explanation, but fitting the skeptic's prior presupposition is where the advantages end.

Hallucinations fail to account for group appearances granted as historical by skeptics and doesn't work for hostile witnesses like Paul who didn't even know Jesus but wanted to kill his followers. The best explanation is the one offered by

¹²⁶ Gary Habermas "The Case for Christ's Resurrection" in *To Everyone an Answer: The Case for the Christian Worldview*. "[W]e have only one contemporary eyewitness account of a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus, namely Paul's.

¹²⁷ Licona (2010),

Christianity: that Jesus rose from the dead. The only reason to keep it off the table is if you take God off the table before you start looking.

Dr. Shapiro mentioned many things about the life of Jesus but didn't face any of these three facts. Instead, he cited clearly inaccurate information to lead the audience astray. For example, he said Jesus may never have existed at all. To this point, scholar and skeptic Bart Ehrman pulls no punches. In a friendly crowd, receiving an award from Freedom from Religion Foundation president Dan Barker, Ehrman said:

There is so much evidence that....this is not even an issue for scholars of antiquity...There is no scholar in any college or university in the western world who teaches Classics, Ancient History, New Testament, early Christianity, any related field who doubts that Jesus existed...That is not evidence...but if you want to know about the theory of evolution vs the theory of creationism and every scholar in every reputable institution in the world believes in evolution. It may not be evidence, but if you have a different opinion you'd better have a pretty good piece of evidence yourself...The reason for thinking Jesus existed is because he is abundantly attested in early sources...Early and independent sources certainly indicate that Jesus existed...One author we know about, knew Jesus' brother.....I'm sorry, I respect your disbelief, but if you want to go where the evidence goes...I think that atheists have done themselves a disservice by jumping on the bandwagon of mythicism,

because frankly, it makes you look foolish to the outside world.¹²⁸

We need go no further than the peer-reviewed literature published by skeptics who should otherwise be inclined not to say such things. To be fair, these very same critics don't conclude the resurrection best explains the facts, but conclusions about things with such weighty implications don't happen in a vacuum. All sorts of factors influence our conclusions. Remember, history is a science of discovering what most probably happened so the urge is strong to wedge in other factors such as philosophical presuppositions, lifestyle habits, emotional attachment, upbringing, social setting, academic pressure, wealth, and recognition. No matter where we fall on the resurrection question, a variety of influences come into play. It's at this point that we must part with the skeptics cited above with whom we've agreed so far on key matters of science, ethics, human experience, and history. For those following their desires, just about any theory can be made to fit. For the rest of us who go where the evidence leads, there's the hope eternal in the resurrection of Jesus.

¹²⁸ Bart Ehrman - Freedom From Religion Foundation Lecture in Raleigh, NC in 2014
First Q & A question at about 51 Min - maventruth.co/FN47

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- Cold Case Christianity | www.Coldcasechristianity.com
- Free Thinking Ministries | www.freethinkingministries.com

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SECTION SIX

NOTES

WRITE, JOURNAL, DRAW, OR ...

Use the following pages to take notes while listening to a speaker, while having a conversation, for journaling during trainings or just needing to remember something. Use these pages however you want!

This guidebook is yours and it will be one of your great treasures and souvenirs from this trip. Use these blank pages for whatever you need.

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Afterword

Around 2012, I met Brett Kunkle, who at the time was reaching youth all over America through Stand to Reason. Brett and his family began attending Grace Fellowship Church in Costa Mesa, California, where I was the youth pastor between 2008 and 2019. Brett and his wife Erin quickly began involving their five children in our youth ministry and started sharing their giftings with our youth as well.

God brought me into youth ministry months after getting my Bachelor of Arts from Oregon, where I studied business entrepreneurship and journalism. I had no formal Biblical, Worldview, or Apologetics training. Brett slowly took me under his wing and began to mentor me. When Brett first invited my youth group to attend an immersive experience with him to Salt Lake City, Utah, to talk with Mormons about their beliefs I kindly rejected the offer. I told him it was because our schedule was already set for the next year and we wouldn't be able to make the change.

Although this was indeed true, the real reason was because I feared to introduce my students to something I myself was unfamiliar with and scared of. The next year I once again set up our schedule without an immersive experience included.

However, it was that year I took my students to Hume Lake Christian Camps, where Brett was teaching a breakout session for high school students to ask *any* question they had about God, faith, Christianity, or the Bible. This breakout session was during our free time where I'd paid and signed our group up for a high ropes course.

When Brett gave his seminar pitch during chapel that morning a few of my students approached me asking if they could skip

our high ropes experience to attend his Q&A. I thought I would be sent to eternal damnation if I said *no* so I obediently told them I'd be open to this but informed them we wouldn't get a refund. This was my attempt of throwing on a little guilt.

When free time came, not one of my fifty students showed up for our high ropes time together. All fifty went to sit in and hear Brett's Q&A seminar where my students and many others asked questions about sexuality, God, family, the Bible, and more. Each question was real and was hard. I couldn't believe Brett had the courage to put himself through this, but I soon realized the Q&A wasn't difficult for him and he was well-trained and equipped in understanding each argument and objection.

As I listened to the entire Q&A intently, I had the epiphany my high school students (and those from other churches) really wanted the church to answer the difficult questions they were asking due to being raised in a non-Christian culture.

It was right after this seminar I approached Brett and shared with him my epiphany and I was ready to introduce apologetics and his Immersive Experiences into my youth ministry. I was ready to humble myself and journey with my students in learning all we needed in order to appropriately defend our faith and converse tactfully and lovingly with non-believers.

I began taking students on these trips in the summer of 2014 and have not missed a trip since. I began with the Biblical Immersive Experience, then the Apologetics Immersive Experience, and lastly the Worldview Immersive Experience.

It was after the Apologetics Immersive Experience when Brett and I together created the Worldview Immersive Experience,

which created a three-year immersive experience cycle I continued with my students.

The youth ministry I served ran camps, retreats, events, traditional mission trips, and more, but none were proven to be more impactful than MAVEN's Immersive Experiences.

The Apologetics Immersive Experience, which you are embarking on through this guidebook, has been a true gift to students, and especially to my seniors as they get ready to head off into colleges where their faith will be challenged to new levels.

I am proud of you for attending this trip and for having the courage to engage in an immersive experience, which will forever change you. You may have pushback from your church, parents, and/or peers but stay strong, be prayerful, and engage in this trip with everything you have.

Use this guidebook as a phenomenal tool as you prepare, embark on, and debrief your trip. This guidebook has been tweaked and perfected since 2014 to help attendees get as much out of this trip as possible.

My prayer is sincerely with you as you engage with skeptics.

Chad Merrihew

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Thank you to Michael Licona for writing the incredibly insightful and important devotionals for students to use each morning while preparing for each day's experiences while on the trip.

Thank you, Chad Merrihew and Jessica McDonald, for sharing your trip journal which you two have honed so thoroughly over the years with thousands of students. This section of the guidebook will help each student embarking on our Apologetics Immersive Experience to faithfully process each day as they encounter atheists and skeptics who will challenge their faith.

Thank you to all those who have donated time, talent, and treasure to produce this guidebook and the associated training videos which are a critical part of our Apologetics Immersive Experience. Your gift was a gift from the Lord.

Thank you, Glenn Pinson, (MAVEN's Immersive Experience Director) for your true belief and daily commitment to Maven's Immersive Experiences.

And, lastly, thank you to MAVEN's board for your time, support, and resources in making this Immersive Experience and guidebook possible.

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