

CHAPTER 2: Proposing an Infinite Answer

Discovering the Fingerprints of a Purpose-Giving God in History

Reference: *Surprised by Faith*, pages 11-21 (fourth edition); pages 23-31 (third edition)

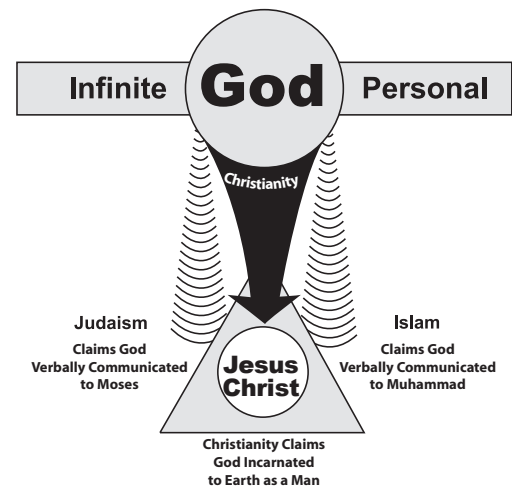
Getting Focused

- Does it matter which religion you believe in?
- How can you know that God exists and what He is really like?
- Believing in God is just a matter of blind faith, isn't it?

As discussed in chapter 1, the existence of a God who is infinite—and thus knows the answers to all the questions about life and eternity—is necessary in order for the finite (all of us) to discover ultimate purpose. This God would also have to be a personal being with intellect, will, and emotion in order to intelligibly communicate these answers and make a relationship with Him a possibility. Yet if it's true, as some maintain, that God is invisible, intangible and elusive, how can we be certain that His existence is not just the result of our imagination? We will discover a reasonable test in this chapter which can help us to know.

Making the Discovery

1. A God who can give ultimate purpose to creation must be both an _____ and a _____ being. Only an infinite God—one who is absolute, perfect and eternal—and a personal God—one with intellect, will and emotion—is truly independent, and capable of knowing and revealing ultimate purpose to His finite creation.
2. Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism think of god as infinite, but not a _____ being capable of being verified by eyewitnesses.
3. Western religions such as those of the Greeks and Nordic peoples think of gods as personal beings, but not _____.
4. Judaism, Islam and Christianity all claim that God is _____ personal and infinite.
5. Christianity is unique from the other two in claiming that the personal and infinite God was born of a _____ woman, grew up in a real earthly family, and had a _____ adult ministry, which was testified by thousands of eyewitnesses 2,000 year ago.
6. Christianity is the only religion which claims a God who is both infinite and personal, and whose personal visit to the physical world as a human can be _____ verified.
7. According to Christianity, Jesus is not just a prophet or holy man—He is _____ incarnate. This is our second *FaithSearch* discovery.



DISCOVERY #2

“Ah-ha!” Christianity alone claims we can know that God exists because He came to earth physically as the man Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago!

Application and Reflection

1. **The Bible says** that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) and in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

No one has ever seen God; but God's only Son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known (John 1:18 NEB).

How many of the items in the list below are infinite? (Circle each.) What are the rest? _____

How many are personal beings? (Underline each.)

horse	tree	universe	sun	atomic bomb	God
automobile	satellite	people	electricity	skyscraper	air

Suppose someone said to you, "Why does it matter that God is infinite and personal? How does that make any difference for my life's purpose?" (The discussion below may help you.)

The distinctions between the characteristics of infinite and finite, and their importance, are not always clear. They are difficult for us to grasp because everything we know, think and experience is limited or finite. We have limited power, limited knowledge; we are confined to space and restricted by time. That's why people sometimes ask, "If God made the world, then who made God?" The thought that something or someone is eternal, i.e., had no beginning and has no end is virtually impossible for us to grasp.

Likewise, it is difficult for us finite beings to comprehend a God who is eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing and outside of time and space. But unless such a God exists, the universe is an impersonal happenstance; we are each temporary cosmic orphans within that happenstance; and we have no greater significance than the short vapor of time in which we each exist. In that case, death is the final victor. As we all know, there are no moving vans behind hearses!

In the cosmic sense, we cannot know whether there is any existence or reality other than what we experience from the cradle to the grave. In other words, unless there is an infinite and personal God who created the universe and us for a purpose—and who tells us that He did it and why, and where we are headed after death—our crisis remains. That's why it's important to know whether God exists and revealed Himself to us. This scenario is what Christianity claims actually happened. This **FaithSearch** Discovery presentation and the *Surprised by Faith* text both reveal the evidence supporting that claim.

2. **The Bible says** that Jesus' virgin birth was prophesied hundreds of years before it happened (Isaiah 7:14) and the name given Him identified His true nature as God.

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23; cf. Isaiah 9:6-7).

3. **The Bible says** that Jesus (the Word) is God eternal, the creator of the world, and yet became incarnate as man.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things came into being through Him...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1,3,14).

Have you ever said—or heard it said—that all religions are basically the same? Is that really true? What would you say if someone said that to you?

If Jesus is God and created the world, did He leave His fingerprints on it? Where would we look for the evidence of His fingerprints in the creation? (The following discussion will contribute to an understanding of these questions.)

The foundational question about the origin of the universe and of life is whether they are the result of random processes (chance) or intelligent action (design).

“Writing” can be used to illustrate how we can identify design in nature. The following writing is complex: ngnylnieredcbecluasanesnteira. But when the same letters are organized to “Design can be clearly seen in nature,” they are specified, i.e., contain a message. The likelihood of getting this latter arrangement of letters by chance is virtually zero. Design by intelligence is the better explanation. Likewise, when molecular biologists find encoded specified information in the DNA (chromosomes) of living cells, would they not be justified in concluding it came about by design, i.e., it is best explained by intelligent action? The DNA blueprint that embryologically constructs the human brain and heart are so highly specified that the combined intelligence of the entire human race has never constructed a “machine” that comes even close to approximating their performance.

Therefore, the evidence of design in nature should be our first clue that there must be a Designer. To deny the existence of God is to deny the implication of the data found in the natural world. According to a 1996 survey of scientists, 40 percent said they believed in a personal God who answers prayer. To be a scientist and a theist is not a contradiction. A major movement in America today is that of design—that evidence in the natural world points to an intelligent origin. This movement is being led by Ph.D. scientists from major colleges and universities. (See dissentfromdarwin.org.)

4. **The Bible says** that no other personal and infinite God exists who knows the answers to all the ultimate questions and gives purpose to life.

[The Lord says,] ... “there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior...I make known the end from the beginning...I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please” (Isaiah 45:21b; 46:10, NIV).

If you do believe in God, how would you answer the question, “What positive benefits have I experienced in my life which are the result of my faith in God?”

If you do not believe in God or are uncertain, how would you answer the question, “What positive benefits have I experienced in my life that are a result of my skepticism or atheism?”

Looking Ahead

One of the conditions for testing the claim that Jesus is God is the existence of records of eyewitnesses that tell what He said and did. Do such records exist? How can we know they are trustworthy? That’s what we will discover in the next chapter.

Answers to “Fill in the Blanks”: 1. infinite, personal; 2. personal; 3. infinite; 4. both; 5. virgin, miraculous; 6. historically; 7. God; 1. finite