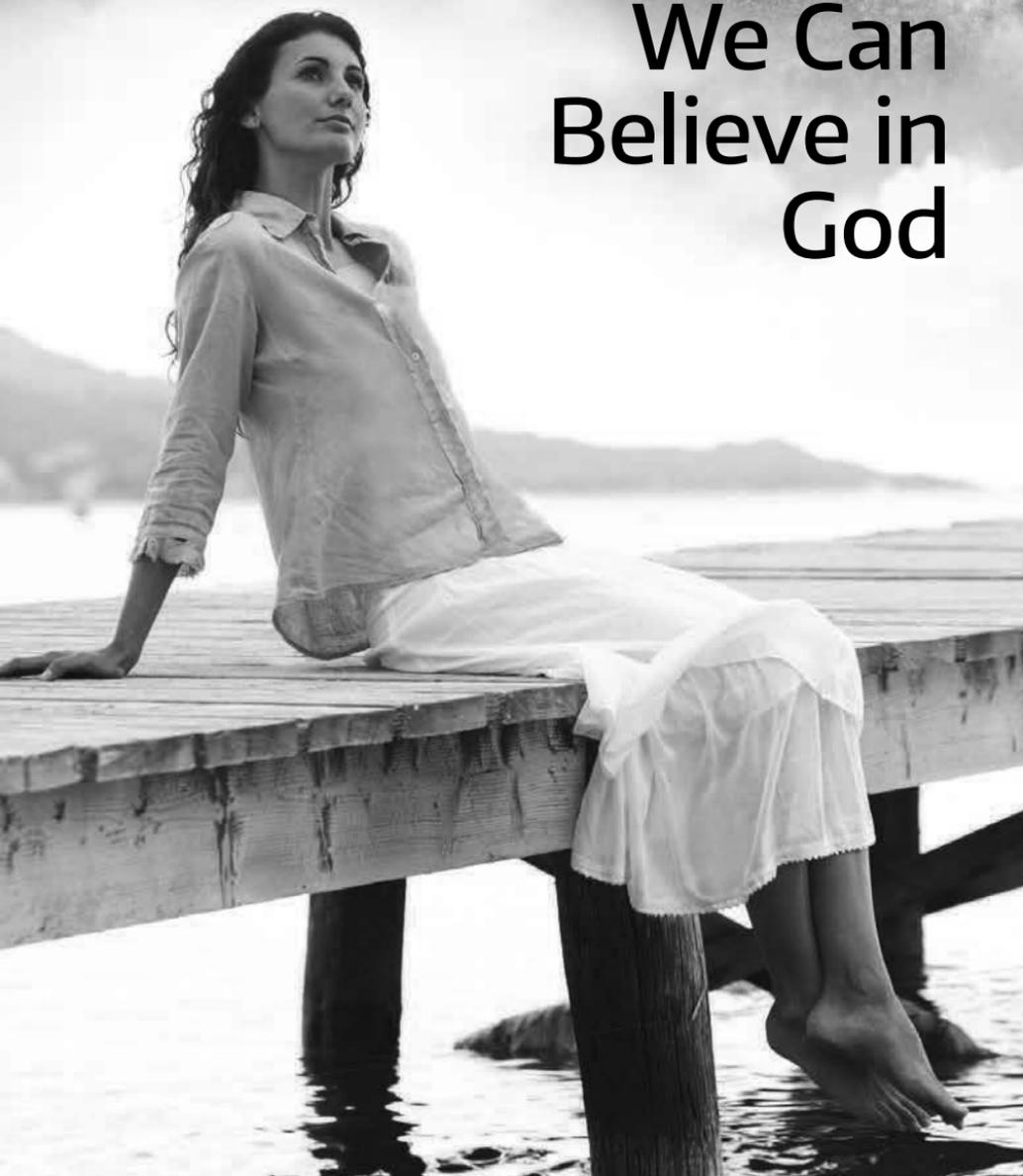


DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

1

We Can Believe in God





“I USED TO MOCK GOD,” said Mark. But that all changed when his airplane ran into a nighttime snowstorm and there was not enough fuel to reach the Alaskan Arctic airstrip. His plane had been running on empty for 30 minutes when the engine started misfiring. As he prepared to crash into the Bering Sea, Mark grasped his last option. He had never prayed before, but in desperation, he lifted up a silent prayer. “If there is a God, I need your help now!”

Immediately, the plane popped out of the snowstorm. But Mark now faced the problem that he had another 20 miles to fly with an empty fuel tank! When he landed, there was no earthly reason his plane should have traveled that distance with no fuel. Mark believes God added an hour of fuel to his tank. “When I landed, I was a different man. I was not a Christian, but I was a believer in God.” Mark thought about his grandmother, the Christian in the family. “So Grandma was right; there is Someone out there.”

Like Mark, many people struggle with the thought that maybe God exists. Often, it takes being confronted with a life-or-death experience to bring a person to a decision. For some it begins with the birth of a child. As they look at the miniature-but-perfect little human being in the crib who developed in nine months, it seems this little one could not just have happened! As they watch their child flex his or her fingers and toes and see the smile and excitement when their child recognizes them, it causes many to wonder—*Is there a God? A Creator?*

1 | Everything Designed Has a Designer

The design of the human body demands the existence of a Designer.

Have you ever pondered all that's involved in the function of the human brain? The brain is made up of around 100 billion nerve cells. Each cell is connected to another 10,000 cells. This means that, in total, we have around 1,000 trillion connections in our brains. These are ultimately responsible for who we are. Our brains control the decisions we make, the way we move, the way we feel. The functions of the brain keep the intricate organs of the body working in harmony and balance with each other. The human brain is truly remarkable!

The four parts of the brain have different functions. For example, the cerebrum is responsible for thoughts, such as reasoning, planning, emotions, problem-solving, and perceptions. The cerebellum works to maintain balance, muscle tone, and gait. The brain stem is especially important since it deals with blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate. Finally, the limbic system controls hunger, thirst, memory, fear, and emotions. These different processes must work together.

That's the way it is with the whole human body. Lungs and heart, nerves and muscles, all perform incredibly complicated tasks that depend on other incredibly complicated tasks, directed by your brain. No wonder the psalmist concluded that the human body speaks loud and clear of a wonderful Creator:

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well" (Psalm 139:14).

We don't have to go far to find the "works" of God. The evidence right in our own bodies points to an infinitely skillful Designer. Consider the chances of a stomach, brain, heart, lungs, arteries, veins, kidneys, ears, eyes, and teeth all developing together and beginning to function at the same moment in time. What is the most reasonable explanation for the design of the human body?

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness' . . . so God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26, 27).

The first man and woman could not just have happened. The Bible affirms that God designed us in His image. He is the great Engineering Intelligence who designed us and brought us into being.



2 | Everything Made Has a Maker

But evidence for God is not confined to the design of our bodies; it's also spread across the heavens.

Using NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers can now precisely measure the distance of stars up to 10,000 light years away—10 times farther than previously possible. The Hubble Telescope, launched in 1990, is still sending back valuable data. During June and July of 2012, astronomers using Hubble discovered a tiny fifth moon, previously unknown, moving around the icy dwarf planet, Pluto.

Look up into the starry night sky. There are millions of stars and galaxies—all moving at incomprehensible speeds, perfectly balanced, perfectly synchronized in space—orbits within orbits, proceeding on track and on time. Who orchestrates this marvelous dance? Is it all just occurring without design or direction?

No wonder the psalmist concluded that the stars speak of a glorious Maker.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3).

What can we reasonably conclude by looking at the intricate design and vast size of the universe?

"He [God] is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17).

All creation boldly testifies: "God designed! God created!" From the perfect balance of proton and electron in the atom to

the whirl of planets around the sun, we find evidence of a master plan, a Master Thinker, of God the Master Designer and the Infinite Creator.

When an anthropologist, digging in the sands of New Mexico, comes across an arrowhead that has been chiseled into shape, he immediately concludes that a Native American created the object. He will even attempt to assign a date to the arrowhead and determine the tribe to which it belonged.

No anthropologist ever argues that arrowheads got there by chance. No one has attempted to explain that lightning or wind or

water could have shaped these objects. It seems perfectly obvious to everyone that a human being made them.

Yet when many scientists dig up fossils, evidence of living things from the past, they make a very different

assumption. They don't see the hand of a Creator; they assume these creatures must have been produced by the blind forces of nature, that they just naturally evolved.

The animal fossils we discover, even those buried deepest in the geologic layers, represent creatures infinitely more complex than any arrowhead. So why not draw the obvious conclusion? Someone had to create them! The Bible suggests a logical answer to the question of origins:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

In these simple words, “In the beginning God,” we find the answer to the mystery of life. The first doctrine recorded in the



Bible is that there is a God; in fact, this first verse in the Bible tells us of His mighty act of creation. Dr. Arthur Compton, Nobel Prize-winning physicist, commenting on this verse of Scripture, once said:

“For myself, faith begins with a realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being and created man. It is not difficult for me to have this faith, for it is incontrovertible that where there is a plan there is intelligence—an orderly, unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered—‘In the beginning God.’”

Many great scientific minds believe in God. The book *Behind the Dim Unknown*, edited by John Clover Monsma, contains 26 chapters, each chapter written by a scientific researcher who is both a specialist in his field and also a Christian. Each author emphasizes the same fundamental truth—God exists.

In the words, “In the beginning God,” we find the foundation of all existence. The Bible does not attempt to prove God—it *declares* His existence. That God exists is proven by our own existence and also by the existence of the things we see around us. Every effect must have an adequate cause. There is design in this world, hence there must be a Designer. The things around us cry out that God designed, God created, God sustains. Only life—or its ultimate Source—produces life. The only plausible answer to the origin of the universe, this world, and human beings, according to the Bible—is God.

3 | God Comes Into Personal Relationships With People

The God who designed the starry heavens, who created the universe, comes into personal relationships with people. Deep in the mind and heart of every individual, God has revealed a



knowledge of His existence. He is “the true Light which gives light to every man” (John 1:9).

The Bible asserts that our Creator seeks personal relationships with us. Abraham “was called the friend of God” (James 2:23). “The Lord spoke to Moses . . . as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11). And God will enter into a personal relationship with you and become your Friend. Jesus promised those who follow Him: “You are My friends” (John 15:14).

About 2,500 years ago, a group of Greek philosophers discussed the question, “What is the briefest possible definition of man?”

Plato suggested: “Man is a two-legged animal.”

Another philosopher, however, exposed this definition’s limitations by fetching a rooster. He held it up and said, “Behold Plato’s man!”



Our longing for God leaves us restless until we find our rest in Him

They pondered in silence a few moments until one of the thinkers exclaimed, “I have it! Man is a religious animal.”

That’s it in a nutshell. Humanity is incurably religious. We alone feel a sense of need for a Higher Power. All of us, whether atheistic or devout, have wrestled with the idea of God. We’re distinguished from animals by our imagination and reason, and by our will to choose right or wrong. No animal ever builds an altar for worship. Yet everywhere you find men and women, you find them worshipping. Deep within every human heart is a desire to worship, a consciousness of God.

God has placed within all of us a desire to come into companionship with Him. When we respond to our longing and find God, there is no longer a doubt about His existence and our need. A Christian believes in God because he or she has met Him and has discovered that He satisfies the heart’s deepest needs. The God



When I consider Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
what is man that You
are mindful of him?

whom Christians have joyfully found to exist gives us a new perspective, new meaning, new motives, new purposes, and new joys.

God doesn't promise a life free from trouble and conflict, but He does assure us that He will guide and sustain us if we come into a personal relationship with Him. And millions of Christians will testify that they would give up everything rather than go back to a life without God.

This is the greatest wonder of all—that the Almighty God who designed all creatures and created and sustains the galaxies also desires a personal relationship with every man and woman, boy and girl. David marveled at this, when he wrote:

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him?”
(Psalm 8:3, 4).

Our Creator is “mindful” of each one of us. He takes as personal an interest in you as if you were the only being He had created. He says:

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you”
(Jeremiah 31:3).

Now, it’s only reasonable that a personal God would want to reveal Himself to His created beings just as a father desires that his children know him. And God reveals Himself to us in the Bible. *(Guide 2 will give evidence that the Bible is a reliable Book given to us by the God who created us.)*

4 | What Kind of God Is He?

In the Bible, God tells us who He is and what He is like. What pattern did God use for creating men and women?

So we can believe in God because . . .

. . . of the intricate design in all of His creation.

. . . of the longing for God within us that leaves us restless until we find our rest in Him.

. . . when we seek and find Him, God satisfies our every need and longing!

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

We are made in God’s image. He created us to have a personal relationship with Him. Our abilities to reflect and feel, to remember and hope, to ponder and analyze—all are derived from Him. Since God has a personality, what is His dominant trait?

“God is love” (1 John 4:8).

God relates to human beings out of His own heart of love. There is nothing He has done or ever will do that is not motivated by a selfless, sacrificial love.

5 | How Jesus Reveals What God Is Like

Which family member gives us an idea of what God is like?

“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” (Malachi 2:10).

In the Bible, God repeatedly speaks of Himself as a Father. Some of the father images we see today are anything but desirable. There are neglectful dads, abusive dads, and dads who don’t seem to care. God is not like that. Rather, He is a caring, sensitive Father. He is the kind of Father who loves to spend time with His son or daughter, the kind of Father who makes life fun and enjoyable.

God, our loving Father, wanted to do more than reveal Himself through the words of Scripture. He knew that a person we live with is much more real to us than someone we only hear about or read about in a book. So He decided to enter our world as a real Person.

God came down to our level—He became like us—so He could teach us how to live and be happy, and how to have eternal life. It enabled us to see what God is really like.

How did God visit the world as a Person?

“She [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

God came down to our world in the Person of Jesus.

A small boy and his older brother were standing before a large portrait of their father who had died when the younger boy was a baby.

“Tell me,” the younger brother said, “just what was Father like?”

The older boy attempted to tell his little brother something about their father. He described his strength. He said he was a good man, kind and handsome. He was friendly, and people liked to be with him. He was always gentle with Mother. He made people happy.

In spite of all the older brother could say, the small boy could not form a satisfying picture of his father. He wanted so much to know what his father was like. At last he interrupted his brother with the question, “Tell me one thing, Henry, was Father anything like you?”

The older boy hesitated a moment, then said: “Well, friends of ours who knew Father best say that I’m the living image of him. And even Mother says the same.”



With his heart all aglow, the small boy walked away, saying: “Now I know exactly what my dad was like. He was just like my brother, Henry.”

Jesus came to our world as God in human flesh. Jesus is “the Son of God” (Mark 15:39)—God made visible, the thought of God made audible. Jesus Himself said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). So if you have seen Jesus, you have seen God Himself. Whenever you want to know what God is like, just look at Jesus as the Bible reveals Him.

As you read the story of Jesus in the four Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, you will discover a fascinating portrait of our Heavenly Father. Rough, self-sufficient fishermen dropped their nets to follow Jesus, and small children flocked to receive His blessing. He could comfort the most devastated sinners and disarm the most self-righteous hypocrites. He healed everything from blindness to leprosy with the quiet assurance of a doctor prescribing a couple of aspirin. His two-word command: “Be still!” forced a violent storm to calm down like a disobedient child brought suddenly to his senses. In all His actions, Jesus demonstrated that God is love. He met human needs in a way no one had ever done before Him—or has since!

Jesus’ final glorious revelation of what God is like happened at the cross. That’s where He died for us.

How do we benefit from Christ’s death?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Jesus died not only to give us a happier, fulfilled life now, but also to give us eternal life. Jesus is God’s “only begotten Son”—He is unique, one of a kind. He is the one and only Being who is both fully God and fully man.

Continued on page 16

WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. Why does God ask you to worship Him? (Psalm 96:4-9—see verse 5; Isaiah 45:18; Revelation 4:11)

2. God wants to have a personal relationship with you. What are two illustrations He gives in His Word to help you understand how close and deep this relationship with Him really is?

(a) Isaiah 49:15 _____

(b) Revelation 3:20 _____

3. God is love. Can anything or anyone separate you from His love? (Romans 8:38, 39)

How long will God's love for you last? (Jeremiah 31:3) _____

4. God has revealed Himself to men and women in different ways, but through whom can you see God most clearly? (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

5. Who does the Bible say created all things? (John 1:1-3; 10, 14; Colossians 1:3, 4, 13-18)

For many ages, people wondered about, hoped for, and dreamed about God. Many thought to themselves, “If only God were like this!” or “If only God were like that!” But the beautiful, self-sacrificing life of Jesus and His death on the cross revealed God more clearly than ever. People found themselves looking into the very face of God, seeing Him as He really is: love—eternal and immortal love!



You can discover God right now as Jesus reveals Him in the pages of the Bible. That discovery

has led many people to decide: “I want a personal relationship with the One who created me and loves me.”

My Decision

- I would like to say “Thank You” to God for creating me and the wonderful world around me. I want to thank Him for His great love for me personally.

My Prayer

Father, thank You for creating this world for me to enjoy; thank You for creating me and loving me so much, that You are willing to guide my life. I ask You to meet my personal needs and to lead me as I read the Bible. I ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE 1

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