

“Room For Doubt—Reason For Hope”

Room For Doubt Workshop – January 31, 2016

Minier Christian Church

Resource Webpage: <http://worldvieweyes.org/minier.html>¹

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Room For Doubt is a grant-funded program that provides learning experiences and resources to strengthen the faith of committed Christians, address the questions of those who have doubts about their Christian heritage, and represent the Christian message to those who are skeptical about its claims.

Introduction

A. Faith vs. Doubt?

A. Don't doubt

1. Thomas (John 20)
2. Peter (Matt 14:22-33)
“You of _____.”
3. Matt 21:21 “If you have faith and do not doubt”
4. James 1:6 “... You must _____ and not _____.”

B. Another look at doubt

1. John the Baptist early (John 1:19–34)
2. John the Baptist later (Matt 11:1-11 and Luke 7:18-30)
3. Doubting Thomas
4. Mark 16:11 [Mary Magdalene reports the resurrection of Jesus]: “When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.”
5. Jude 1:22 “Be merciful to those who _____.”
6. Mark 9:24 [father with possessed son]: “I do believe; help my _____” (Mark 9:24).

C. Room for Doubt; yet Reason for Hope

1. Jesus' response to Thomas (John 20:27–29).
2. Jesus' response to John the Baptist (Matt 11:4-5; Luke 7:21-22).

II. Reason for Hope: Some Biblical Directives

- A. **1 Peter 3:15** _____ [apologia] the faith. (1 Peter 3:15; Acts 22:1; 24:10; 26:12; Phil 1:7,16). Cf. *dialegomai* (reasoned discussion) in Acts 17:2-3,17; 18:4,19; 19:8-9; 24:12).

1 Peter 3: ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer [apologia] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. [NIV]

¹ The resource webpage provides access to outlines (including answers for blanks), presentation slides, and more.

Phil 1:7b "... whether I [Paul] am in chains or defending [*apologia*] and confirming the gospel, all of you share the affection of Christ Jesus."

"Perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that ... [we] have nothing whatsoever for which to apologize" (**Alvin Plantinga**, "Christian Life Partly Lived," in *Philosophers Who Believe*, ed. Kelly James Clark [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 69).

B. **Col. 2:8** "Don't be taken _____ by deceptive philosophies."

C. **2 Cor. 10:5** "We _____ arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

D. **2 Timothy 2:24-25** "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome but be kind to all ... with gentleness _____ those who are in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth"

E. **Titus 1:9** "He [an elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and _____ those who oppose it."

F. **Jude 3** "Contend earnestly for the faith."

G. Early church preaching and teaching (e.g. Acts 2:14-36; Acts 7:1-53; Acts 17:16-34).

III. Reason for Hope: Some Biblical Objectives

A. _____ (Matt. 16:15-17; John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 4:15; Heb. 11:6ab).

B. _____ (James 2:19; Matt. 4:1-3; Hebrews 11:1,6c).

C. _____

1. See Mark 12:30; cf. Deut. 6:4-5.

2. Compare Jesus' question and Peter's "great confession" (Matt 16:15-16) with Jesus' question of Peter after His resurrection (Jn. 21:15-17).

IV. Reason for Hope: Some Biblical Attitudes

A. Be _____.

1. 1 Pet. 3:15 "with gentleness and reverence"

2. 2 Tim. 2:24-25 "not quarrelsome but kind ... with gentleness"

3. Jude 22 "Have mercy on some, who are doubting"

B. Be _____ (see Mark 11:27-33).

V. Reason for Hope: Some Biblical Strategies

1. _____ Apologetics

2. _____ Apologetics

3. _____ Apologetics

A. “Negative” Apologetics: Replying to specific criticisms to show that Christianity is

_____.

1. E.g. The disciples of Jesus were accused of stealing Jesus’ body (Matt 28:11-15).
2. E.g. Festus accuses Paul of being insane (Acts 26:22-32).
3. E.g. The claim that Christians “all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar [the state]” (Acts 17:5-8).
4. E.g. The problem of evil. Accusation: The reality of evil is inconsistent with the reality of an existing God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good.

B. “Positive” Apologetics: Attempting to show that **Christianity is**

_____.

1. **Evidences in nature** (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32).
2. **Miracles** (1 Kings 18; Ex 10:1-2; Jn 20:30-31; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:1-20).
 - a. John 20:30-31 “... these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”
 - b. Acts 2:22-24 “... Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him”
3. **Fulfilled prophecy** (Lk 24:25-27; Acts 17:2-3; 26:22-23; Deut 18:18-22; Is 7:14; Micah 5:2; Zach 9:9; Is 53; Ps 22:1-8; 16:10).
4. **The nature and reliability of scripture.**
 - a. 2 Tim 3:14-17 “... all Scripture is inspired by God”
 - b. 2 Pet 1:20-21 “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”
 - c. John 10:34-36 “... and the Scripture cannot be broken.”
5. **Social benefits** of the Christian way (Titus 3:8; Gal 6:9-10; 1 Tim 5:8).
6. **Personal experience.**
 - a. John 9:25-30 “... One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
 - b. Paul’s testimonies to the Jews (Acts 22), to Felix (Acts 24:10-23) and to Agrippa (Acts 26).

C. “Neutralizing” Apologetics: Attempting to show that **other worldviews are**

_____ or _____.

1. Biblical precedent.
 - a. 2 Cor 10:5 “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God”

- b. Titus 1:9-11 "... able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."
- c. Rom 1:21 "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

2. Apologetic advantage: It does not employ _____ in its method.

VI. Reason for Hope: Some Examples

A. The origin of the universe

1. The possibilities
 - a. It's eternal.
 - b. It's self-generating. It caused itself.
 - c. It's just one of a possible *infinite* number of universes (multi-verse).

E.g. **Stephen Hawking**: "Bodies such as stars or black holes cannot just appear out of nothing. But a whole universe can. . . . Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing.... Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going" (*The Grand Design*, 180).

E.g. **Alex Rosenberg**: "Why is there a universe at all? No reason at all. Why is there a multiverse in which universes pop into existence for no reason at all? No reason at all! It's just another quantum event. What science and scientism tell those who hanker for more is 'Get over it!'" (*The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions* (pp. 38-39).

- d. Generated by something or someone *outside* of space and time.

2. Big Bang cosmology: The universe BEGAN (cf. Gen 1:1).

- a. Initially strongly opposed
- b. Eventually accepted (1965-ff)

- "What we found is evidence for the birth of the universe.... It's like looking at God" (George Smoot, leader of the Cosmic Background Explorer project).
- "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries" (Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 116).

B. The origin of life

1. Candid comments

- a. **Fred Hoyle** (agnostic/atheist):
 - (1) The pure chance of life starting on earth is about 1 in 10 to the 40,000th power.
 - (2) The number of atoms in the visible universe? 10 to the 80th power.
 - (3) "Panspermia": Life was "seeded" on earth from elsewhere.

Fred Hoyle: "Life could not have originated here on the Earth. Nor does it look as though biological evolution can be explained from within an earthbound theory of life. Genes from outside the Earth are needed to drive the evolutionary process. This much can be consolidated by strictly scientific means, by experiment, observation and calculation" (*The Intelligent Universe*, 242).

- b. **George Whitesides**, Professor of Chemistry, Harvard.

"Most chemists believe, as do I, that life emerged spontaneously from mixtures of molecules in the prebiotic Earth. How? I have no idea. . . . On the basis of all the chemistry that I know, it seems to me astonishingly improbable" (*Chemical & Engineering News* 85 [2007]: 12-17).

- c. **Francis Crick**, co-discoverer of the DNA molecule in 1953.

"An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense . . . [the origin of life] is 'almost a miracle.' ...

Every time I write a paper on the origin of life, I swear I will never write another one, because there is too much speculation running after too few facts” (*Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature*, 88, 153).

2. DNA and the information for life

- a. One gram of DNA can store 700 terabytes of data (= 14,000 fifty-gigabyte Blu-ray discs!)
- b. Four “bases”: A,G,C,T (3 billion pairs in humans).
- c. A “triplet” of three consecutive bases gives the code for each specific amino acid to form a protein.
- d. 20 different amino acids are thereby “instructed” to form proteins (from 40-27,000 amino acids for ONE protein).
- e. Even “simple” organisms have many proteins (e.g. E. coli has 4,300 proteins).
- f. Each human cell has DNA (which, if stretched out, would be approximately 6 feet long). By consequence, a human’s DNA (with 100 trillion cells) would reach _____ BILLION miles.

C. The “fine-tuning” of the universe for life

1. Expansion rate of universe “must be fine-tuned to an accuracy of one part in 10^{55} ” (Hugh Ross, in Moreland’s *The Creation Hypothesis*, p. 163).
2. The ratio of proton mass to electron mass (1,836 times heavier).
3. Ratio of number of electrons to number of protons:
 - a. Must be accurate to 1 in 10^{37} power.
 - b. Hugh Ross illustration of piling coins to the moon (see Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, p. 109).
4. Strength of gravity in relation to other primary forces. (See Robin Collins in Strobel’s *Case for a Creator*, pp. 131-132.)
5. Impact on scientists

Fred Hoyle (agnostic/atheist): “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect as monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

Stephen Hawking: “The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers [e.g. ratio of proton to electron mass] seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life” (*A Brief History of Time*, p. 125).

Arno Penzias (Nobel in physics): “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say ‘supernatural’) plan” (quoted in Margenau and Varghese, eds., *Cosmos, Bios, and Theos*, p. 83).

Antony Flew (at age of 81 converted from atheism to theism. He had “to go where the evidence leads”): “I think the most impressive arguments for God’s existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries.... I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe’s intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God” (*There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, p. 88).

6. Biblical claims (Isa 45:18; Ps 19:1-2; Rom 1:20)

Isa 45:18 “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited)” (NASV).

Some Books to Find Reason for Hope

- Craig, William L. and Joseph E. Gorra. *A Reasonable Response: Answers to Tough Questions on God, Christianity, and the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2013.
- Geisler, Norman and Frank Turek. *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Johnson, Donald. *How To Talk to a Skeptic: An Easy-to-Follow Guide for Natural Conversations and Effective Apologetics*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2013.
- Knopp, Richard A. "Room for Doubt, Yet Reason for Hope." An Introduction to Christian Apologetics. Printable and video resources accessible at <http://worldvieweyes.org/CCU2015.html>.
- _____. "Where Will We Go Without God?" *Christian Standard* 149 (June 2014): 38-40.
- _____. "On the Conceptual Relationship Between Religion and Science: Considerations from a Christian Perspective." In *Theology in the Present Age: Essays in Honor of John D. Castelein*, 73-99. Edited by Christopher Simpson and Steven Cone. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J.; Darell Bock; Josh Chatraw. *Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2014.
- Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Lennox, John D. *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* 2nd Ed. Oxford: Lion Books, 2009.
- McDowell, Sean. *Apologetics for a New Generation*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009.
- McGrath, Alister. *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012.
- _____. *Doubting: Growing Through the Uncertainties of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Mittelberg, Mark. *Confident Faith: Building a Firm Foundation for Your Beliefs*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013.
- _____. *The Reason Why Faith Makes Sense*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011.
- Moreland, J. P. and Tim Muehlhoff. *The God Conversation: Using Stories and Illustrations to Explain Your Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 2007.
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2015.
- Powell, Doug. *Holman Quicksource Guide to Christian Apologetics*. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006
- Powell, Kara E. and Chap Clark. *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Sire, James. *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christianity Answer Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- _____. *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.
- Whorton, Mark and Hill Roberts. *Holman Quicksource Guide to Understanding Creation*. Nashville, TN: Holman, 2008.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Allure of Gentleness: Defending the Faith in the Manner of Jesus*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2015.
- Zacharias, Ravi and Norman Geisler, eds. *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Some Websites to Find Reason for Hope

- <http://www.arn.org>. Many resources from the Intelligent Design community.
- <http://coldcasechristianity.com>. J. Warner Wallace, a cold-case homicide detective who defends Christianity.
- <http://ehrmanproject.com>. Offers responses to Bart Ehrman's skeptical claims about the Bible.
- <http://www.faithandevolution.org>. Critically examines both atheistic evolution and theistic evolution.
- <http://www.garyhabermas.com>. Gary Habermas specializes in the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.
- <http://www.leestrobel.com>. Website of former atheist and former *Chicago Tribune* reporter, Lee Strobel.
- <http://oneminuteapologist.com>. Brief video interviews with a variety of Christian thinkers.
- <http://www.reasonablefaith.org>. The website of William Lane Craig, a leading Christian apologist.
- <http://www.reasons.org>. Reasons to Believe website of Hugh Ross, a Christian astronomer.
- <http://www.roomfordoubt.com>. Provides an opportunity to ask questions and access responses and other resources.
- <http://www.rzim.org>. Ravi Zacharias is a powerful and popular Christian apologist.
- <http://www.thepoachedegg.net>. Offers a wide array of apologetic resources.
- <http://www.worldvieweyes.org>. Provides outlines and audio/video resources for presentations by Dr. Rich Knopp.