

DOES GOD EXIST?

November-December 2014

Volume 41 Number 6

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



**What's
In It For Me?**

Does God Exist? Lectureships

Lectures for 2015

- Mar. 1–4 Jericho, NC
336-357-3754
- Apr. 11–12 Muscatine, IA
563-607-7009
- May 17–23 York College
Round Up
402-363-5621

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

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Check our website for an updated list of lectures and contact numbers for the lectureships listed above: www.doesgodexist.org.

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When I speak to groups of unbelievers and skeptics, as I do on a regular basis, I get questions that to many Christians would seem so ridiculous that they do not deserve an answer. One of the reasons for that is that many of us are so far from the thinking of the average person on the street that we do not understand their whole view of life. In a recent private conversation with a young woman whose parents were Christians, I had one of those questions. She looked at me, shook her head and said “It doesn’t look like your Christianity has done much for you, it hasn’t done anything for my parents, and I don’t see what’s in it for me.”

There are so many problems with that last sentence that it is hard to know where to start. For many of us the answer comes out in a single word—SALVATION! For this 16-year-old, salvation was something you think about when you are old and about to die. She told me she did not know about eternity and salvation, but she had learned not to believe everything the preacher said. She then repeated her statement “What is in it for me if I become a ‘Christian?’” “There are incredible things in it for you if you follow the biblical plan for life,” I finally said. Then I began to enumerate them.

A STABLE HOME TO GROW UP IN

We live in a world where marriage and the traditional family model are ridiculed and denigrated. We have those who want “marriage” to include polygamy, polyandry, group marriage, same-sex marriage, and even marriage with animals. In addition, more and more people are living together and having children together without any kind of marriage being involved. Add to that, divorce has become easier and more readily accepted than in the past. Single parents, integrated and melded families, and foster parent-led families are the majority of living arrangements in which children find themselves.

The bottom line here is that in all of these situations there is a lack of stability and children are forced into radical change. Study after study shows that children brought up in environments where there is massive change have problems which are caused by this instability. What is in it if you become a Christian and live in the kind of home that God intended for us to have? It will be a home where there is commitment between a man and a woman. It will be not only a commitment to sexual fidelity, but also a home where husbands love their wives as themselves, and women respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). It will be a home where every time you come home you know who will be there and that their love for you is unconditional. It will be a home where children obey and honor parents, and fathers work very hard at not exasperating their children (Ephesians 6:1–4).



These instructions are not unrealistic pipe-dreams. They are guidelines that are proven to work and to provide stability that allows children to develop into productive citizens. Whether you are a man, a woman, or a child, this plan works and gives the kind of stability and love we all strive for. Every other “social experiment” offered as an alternative to this model has shown great weaknesses, and when people who claim to be Christians do not follow the admonitions God has given us, the result is inevitably heartbreak and emotional pain.

AN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WHO WILL LOVE YOU INSTEAD OF USING YOU

One major unique characteristic of Christianity is that it is not a religion of rigid commandments. Colossians 2:13–14 refers to Jesus nailing the written code, with its regulations to his cross. The Greek word for commandment is *entole*, which is defined as “thing given in charge.” What is it that is “in charge” in Christianity? John 13:34–35 (ESV) finds Jesus giving his followers a new commandment. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.” In 1 John 2:7–10 John expands on the love

concept by saying that the difference between walking in light and in darkness is our capacity to love our brother.

What a contrast this is with the world around us. We live in a world where everything is built around ourselves and using other people. Slavery of all kinds is a major issue in the world. To have a belief system based on caring for others and loving others is incredibly unique. What does Christianity bring to you? It brings a group of people who care about you and will not use you or force you into a life you do not want.

A MORAL CODE THAT WORKS IN MAKING LIFE'S DECISIONS

One of the attractions that all religions offer in one way or another is a moral code to live by. Those who study cults and why cults attract people, conclude that cults offer discipline and a guide to making decisions in life that are fixed and offer structure to life. The problem with these man-made sources is that there is always a leader who uses the cult for his own satisfaction and pleasure.

The Bible's moral code has been proven to work for several thousand years. Whenever mankind has chosen to modify or avoid a moral principle found in the Bible, the result has been catastrophic. What is especially unique about the Bible is that it does not just set up a group of laws to be enforced by a police or military enforcer. Reading Matthew chapters 5 through 7 one sees that attitudes and guidelines for moral principles are given. Jesus does not just say, "Don't murder." What Jesus does is to get at the root of the issue by forbidding his followers to hate. If you do not hate, murder will not happen. Jesus does not just tell his followers to avoid illicit sexual issues, He goes beyond that and tells his followers to watch how they think. The Christian system works! Those of us, like your author, who have tried to live by human systems can tell you from cold, hard personal experience that these human creations do not work. First Corinthians 15:33 warns us that the people we run around with will affect our morality. What a joy it is to be with a group of people who are not out to "score." We can relax and enjoy each other's company knowing that those around us are secure and have no interest in using sex as a tool of control and exploitation.

A WORLD VIEW THAT WILL LEAD YOU TO FULFILLMENT IN LIFE

Being a Christian brings a person into an understanding that real joy in life comes not from using others or controlling them, but from serving them. Acts 20:35 tells us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." That is a true statement. The promise of God is that when we give, "it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down,

shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38, NIV). Jesus commanded what is necessary to have a fulfilling life in John 13:4–17. He washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to “wash one another’s feet.” Serving others is key to fulfillment in life.

What all of this is about is giving Christians a template by which to build the best life we can have on earth. I have lived as an atheist. I have seen that the “survival of the fittest” worldview is not a way to build a meaningful life. As a Christian, I have found incredible fulfillment. My Christian beliefs led me to a successful teaching career and to a life of ministering to the needs of others. This is not a glory trip or an ego trip, but a way of building a successful and meaningful life. No other system on earth does this. Christianity and the Christian way of thinking leads us to great joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment. The alternatives lead to frustration and a never-ending obsession with things and survival.



A MEANS OF LOOKING TO A HIGHER POWER IN FACING PROBLEMS AND TRAGEDIES IN LIFE

Unless there is a purpose in living, the issue of suffering and pain in life can never make sense. Atheism criticizes God for allowing bad things to happen, but then deny there is any real value to good or evil. Atheist Richard Dawkins in his book *River Out of Eden* claims that there is no such thing as evil.

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.¹

I have had some significant problems in life. My son was born blind, mentally challenged, with a form of muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, and schizophrenia. I lost my wife of 49 years to insulin-dependent type-1 diabetes. I mention all this simply to say that it has been my Christian faith that has allowed me to maintain a high quality of life, an optimistic spirit, a continued drive to achieve

certain goals, and a deep involvement in a variety of activities in spite of all of these challenges. In the teachings of Jesus I see this same thing present in the people of Jesus' day. In John 9:1–3 Jesus deals with a family that had a son born blind. When asked why this blindness happened the response of Jesus was, "... that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (verse 3). In Luke 8:26–40 a man in the country of the Gadarenes was severely afflicted with mental illness. Jesus cured him of the malady that had separated him from his family and caused him to live a destructive life in the city cemetery. When the man asked to go with Jesus after he was healed, and be separated from his past, Jesus told him to go and tell people what had happened to him. The man did so with great success.

This is how Christians deal with problems and tragedies in life. Bad things happen to everyone, but only in Christianity do we see purpose and meaning to what has happened—and a way to use the problems in a positive, constructive manner. This has to be one of the most blessed reasons for being a Christian on a purely practical level.

HOPE

In reality, the very first reaction mentioned in this article is a major blessing of being a Christian. There is no guarantee that a 16-year-old will ever see her 17th birthday. Dying is not just for old people. Every day our local newspaper shows that a young person's life has ended. Christians do not have to be worried about the frailty of life. The answer "salvation" IS a major reason for being a Christian on a practical level. It cannot be dismissed as trivial, and the security and lack of fear generated by having hope cannot be ignored.

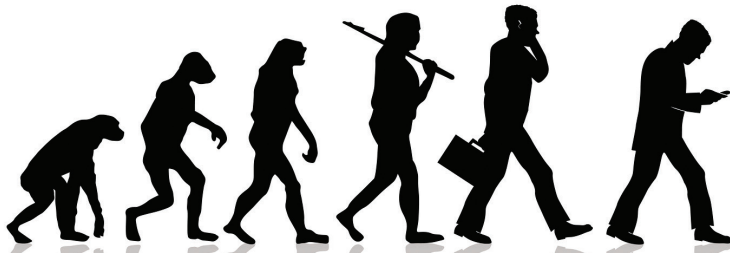
What is in it for me? Eternal life, in addition to all the fringe benefits of having great things brought to us in this life. Thank God for Jesus Christ, for what he taught, how he lived, and what he calls us to do and to be. Paul's frequent assertions that all he needed was Christ for success in life and in eternity, remains true for every one of us.



(See Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:21–23 and 4:13).

—John N. Clayton

1. Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), page 133.



THE NECESSITY OF EVOLUTION FOR CHRISTIANS

We hear a lot of negative discussions about “evolution” in religious literature. One of the things we have frequently discussed in this journal is the fact that the word “evolution” needs to be defined and applied in a positive way by anyone engaging in the discussion of what evolution means. Many confuse evolution with naturalism. Naturalism is the belief that the only thing that exists is the physical world, and that everything in the universe can be explained in terms of physical phenomena. There are many things in man’s experience that do not fit well with naturalistic explanations, and that is the source of the conflict with the Bible. Denying any act of God because it does not have a physical explanation or cause is to ignore a great deal of evidence—beginning with the evidence of creation itself. It also includes the evidence provided by many characteristics of humans—spiritual attributes being just one of them.

In scientific terms, the meaning of the word “evolution” is an unfolding type of change. Very few people would take issue with the fact that living things can change. Agriculture depends on the changes in living things, from new varieties of corn or beans or tomatoes to improved strains of cattle such as the Charolais. Most of us would agree that there were no cockapoos on Noah’s ark, no matter what our interpretation of that biblical story might be. Debates over microevolution and macroevolution get carried away into where microevolution stops and macroevolution begins. The point is that change in biological systems is a fact. Our purpose here is not to extend the debate over evolution, but to point out that there is a vital concept for Christians in the area of change. Christians themselves need to go through an unfolding type of change.

The Bible makes it clear that Christians are to evolve. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness, with ever-

increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (NIV). The Greek word which is translated “transformed” is the same Greek word from which we get our English word “metamorphosis.” Metamorphosis is defined as “a marked change in form or appearance.” We use this word when we describe the change from a chrysalis into a butterfly, or a tadpole into a frog. The Greek word is used only three times in the New Testament—one of them being the describing of the transfiguration.

Christians are to evolve, to become something new. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away.” (Also in Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:15 and 4:24.) Colossians 3:9–10 says, “... you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Many times a person becomes a Christian and both he and those who know him expect instantaneous change. In our world of instant gratification, we assume that if some miraculous change does not happen then the event was a failure. In this case it would mean that God did not fulfill his promises. This is a misconception based upon a failure to understand that becoming a mature Christian is a process—an evolution—not an instantaneous, dramatic display of God’s power. This evolution is directed, designed, and affected by God’s Spirit and we are a part of the process. Here are some biblical descriptions of how we as new Christians can affect our own evolution.

BELIEVE YOU CAN CHANGE

Hopelessness can paralyze us. In Mark 9:23–24 a father of a child that had convulsions came to Christ wanting a cure to his child’s illness. Jesus tells the father, “If you believe, all things are possible” The father responds, “I believe; help my unbelief.”



Many times Jesus refers to belief as a part of a miraculous cure, but sometimes he does not (such as the widow’s son being brought back to life in Luke 7:12–16). I would suggest to you that the miracle had a much more complex purpose than just addressing the physical

problem. Belief is the starting point for change in a person’s life, and the miracles had purpose and meaning to the people in every case where miracles were performed. The idea that to have a miraculous

cure you had to have a certain level of belief is inconsistent with the evidence and with the nature of God. It is also a huge obstacle to a person's overcoming adversity. Almost all twelve-step programs have something built into them which says, "Other members of the group have been able to overcome, and you can too—believe that."

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus emphasizes the power of belief when he says, "if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move." Jesus was not explaining how to operate a bulldozer, but how to move mountains in our lives. Alcoholism, drug addiction, immorality, broken relationships, and infidelity are far bigger mountains for most of us than any physical structure.

BE PATIENT—CHANGE TAKES TIME

How fast does a caterpillar change into a butterfly? When I was a child I decided to catch a caterpillar "in the act" of changing. I wanted to see a caterpillar with wings, so I found a chrysalis and cut it open. All I found was a gooey mess that did not look like anything but a gooey mess. Watching a tadpole become a frog is a fascinating activity, but it is not one that takes place in a nanosecond. The Greek word for "transformed" used in 2 Corinthians 3:18 refers to a metamorphosis, not an instant change.

When you study the lives of the great men in Scripture you do not see instant change. How many times did Abraham fail in his faith before he was able to make the huge leap of faith with Issac? How long did Moses take to change from a shepherd for his father-in-law to the great leader of Israel? How did David evolve from a child defending sheep to the great king of Israel? Even Paul spent three years from the time he was struck on the road to Damascus to when he went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and then 14 more years before his great work with the Gentiles changed the direction of the church (see Galatians 1:15–2:8.)

When I came out of atheism and struggled to find a ministry I could do for the Lord, I not only had no belief that I could do anything, but I had a lot of baggage to get rid of. I could not talk without profanity, and I learned early you could not go to the preacher's house and say, "Pass the #@\$@%&* potatoes." A kind older brother in Christ took me aside and told me he had been through the same struggle, and gave me some suggestions as to how to wean myself from profanity. It took a lot of prayer, and many years of trying and failing before my heart, mind, and vocabulary could be changed. What encouraged me was the fact that my spiritual heroes had gone through similar struggles. I have evolved and become a new man, but I am still evolving and have a lot of other things to work on.

UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN WE BECOME A CHRISTIAN “ALL THINGS BECOME NEW”

Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” This theme is repeated in Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:15 and 4:24; Colossians 3:10; and Hebrews 10:20. As we evolve we become more and more like what God plans for us to be. When you compare a butterfly with a caterpillar you do not see any resemblance between the two. A tadpole does not look much like a bullfrog. A chicken does not look much like an egg.

How God sees us and how his Spirit works within us is completely changed when we come out of the waters of baptism (see Acts 2:37–39). We now have the power to be changed in our attitudes, our relationships, our influence, our priorities, our thinking, and how we manage what God has given to us both in resources and in talents. In 2 Corinthians 3:12–18 Paul talks about those who reject Christ and who refuse to allow themselves to evolve as God would have them do. He says in verse 14 that their “minds were blinded” and there was a “veil upon their hearts.” He then says that we as Christians have freedom. “Our faces are not covered. We all show the Lord’s glory. We are being changed to be like him. This change in us brings more and more glory to God and to us in his sight. This glory comes from the Lord, who is Spirit.”

Do not expect instant gratification when you become a Christian. You have begun a journey of change, and you will be successful. When your evolution is complete you will be what God created you to be, as different from your old self



as a caterpillar is from a beautiful butterfly. The picture of Revelation 21:3–5 is a beautiful creature with God. “Now God’s home is with people. He will live with them. They will be His people. God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone. ... Look I am making everything new” (ERV).

—JNC

WHAT? I'M NOT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE?

by Dick DiTullio

Yeah, this is the proverbial “tough pill to swallow” for many people. And it’s perfectly understandable that we elevate ourselves in relation to everything else. When we come into the world it really is “all about us!” The newly arrived cries and someone immediately feeds it. The child cries and someone changes its nasty diaper. (We MUST be important! Otherwise who would do that?) We cry and someone rocks us to sleep.

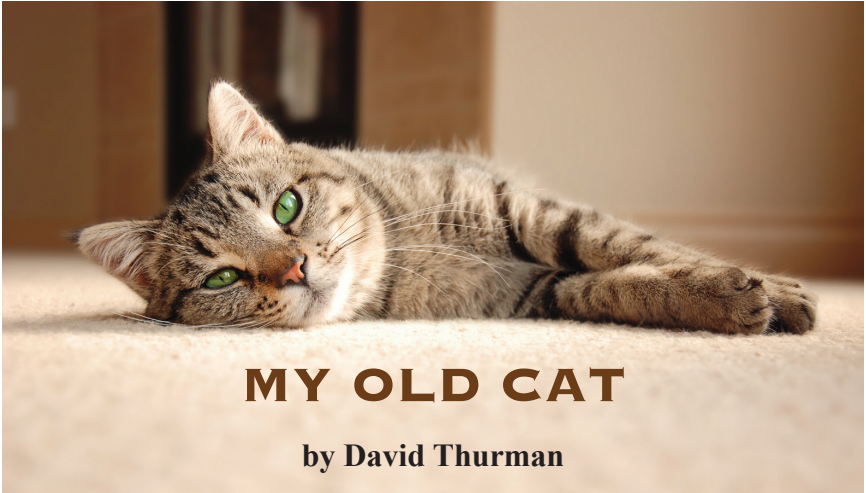
Slowly, over time, the response isn’t quite so immediate. That’s especially true if a sibling arrives. Divided attention is humbling. Then we start to grow up. By the time we hit high school we are still pretty heady. We spend endless hours in front of mirrors because everything has to be “just right.” We need to wear just the right clothes. Our hairstyle has to be “acceptable.” We think we “non-conform,” but even that falls within certain established limits of acceptability. The high school years take a toll. Psychiatrists have warned that many young people base their self-worth on how many Facebook friends they have. (sigh)



Then come the post high school years. We have assumed that everyone thinks about us 24/7, but now reality starts to sink in. “Gee, maybe people aren’t actually thinking about us at all unless we’re right there in front of them” That is a sobering thought.

Add more years and we discover that even standing directly in front of people doesn’t prioritize our presence. All it takes is a vibration from a cell phone to divert their attention to a person far away. I imagine the later years are the worst. I foresee grabbing people by the ears and forcibly turning their heads to make eye contact. “Hello? Remember me?” It will have gone full circle from 24/7 “It’s all about me” to 24/7 “Oh, are you still here?”

But that’s the cycle of life. The balance will never be perfect and yet humility is not a bad thing. Too much of “us” is not in our own best interest. In the later years we tend to think more about God, and perhaps that is because God really does think about us 24/7.



MY OLD CAT

by David Thurman

(This article is reprinted with permission from *Gospel Minutes*. PO Box 50007, Fort Worth, Texas 76105.)

My cat, Maui, is almost sixteen years old, which is getting on up there for a cat. She has lost most of her teeth. The highlight of her day no longer involves a string or a toy bird. Now, instead of playing and chasing until she is tired, she sleeps—resting up for her next nap. In between she has a healthy appetite, but little energy for anything else. Still, as I watch my cat age, I learn some more valuable lessons about God and how He responds to those He cares for.

CLOTHES ARE EASY FOR HER

I was standing in our walk-in closet, trying to figure out what to wear. It was one of those cold morning/warm afternoon fall days in Texas. In comes Maui, rubbing on my leg and purring. I noticed she was wearing the same thing she has worn all her life. She has her thick coat of gray/silver hair and her collar with her tag and contact information. She never has to worry about choosing what to wear or how she looks. For her, those choices are easy.

But, then I realized, they should be easy for me. Why do I worry about what I should wear or how I look? After all, God is going to provide what I need. “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!” (Matthew 6:28–30, NASB). Jesus assures us that God can clothe us just as well as He clothed my cat. My needs are confused by my wants. I want more.

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I want to look a certain way. It would be nice to be a cat who has no worries about what to wear.

And, looking good is not the most important thing anyway. “Your adornment must not be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3–4). My cat is content to look the way she does, without added decoration. I think we could all learn to be content and worry less about how we look. Instead, as Peter says, we should worry about how we act and why we act that way.

SHE WEARS A TAG

The only thing on our cat is a tag that has a phone number and her name. Maui is an indoor cat, but if she manages to get outside she can be returned to us when people read her tag. The tag indicates where she lives and the people she lives with.



As Christians, we too should be wearing a “tag” that lets the world know to Whom we belong. As the believers in Antioch were known, so should we be known. “The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). People around us should not have a problem identifying who our Lord is. When others meet us, there should be something in our attitude, our actions, our love and compassion that tells them we belong to Christ. When we put on

our Lord in baptism, we make a decision to be clothed with him. We no longer live, but He lives in us. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26–27). “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20). Like my cat, we should all wear a name that reflects whose we are.

HER FOOD IS PROVIDED

While I scurry around trying to make a living and put food on the table, my senior feline simply waits for me or my wife, and then starts letting us know it is time to feed her. Due to her loss of teeth, she has to eat soft food, but she cannot open a can. She cannot use a spoon to

put the food in her bowl. She simply waits for us, or pesters us, or complains to us until one of us gets up and feeds her. We try to be diverse, giving her fish one time, chicken another, and so on. But, still, her whole experience with food is totally dependent on us.

Again, I realize I am much like my cat. I work to provide, but in fact, it is the Lord who puts the food on the table. Jesus lets us know that in His model prayer. “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). While we scurry about, thinking we are making it all happen, Jesus reminds us that our food, our provisions, the meal we eat today, is all from God. That is why Jesus goes on to tell us not to worry about the food. “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?” (Matthew 6:26). If God can feed birds and I can feed a cat, why do I worry about God feeding me? As Paul promised, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).



SHE MAKES HER MESSES

As she has gotten older, Maui has become more temperamental in her body functions. She has more hairballs than she did as a younger cat. Each time, she throws up two or three times, causing my wife and me to scramble to get her off the carpet or at least to clean up after her. Although we keep her cat box clean, she has the occasional accident away from her box. About once a week, I am on my knees cleaning up the spots she has created. It is work, and somewhat gross, but it has to be done.

Then, I realized that I too make messes and rely on the Lord to clean them up. “There is none righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). All of us have made a mess of our lives. We have tried to do right, but failed. We have all sinned and all of us have let God down by failing to live as we should.

Some might argue they have been in the church a long time and sin is no longer a big issue. John would say otherwise. “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that

we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10). We never reach a point in our relationship with God that we can claim to be sinless. We have to face and confess our sins. Each time I clean up another mess my cat has made, I remember how God is following me around cleaning up my messes. I keep letting Him down. So, I can be patient with my cat, and I can be patient with others who keep on making messes in their lives.

SHE NEEDS A CLEAN UP

If you make a lot of messes as my cat does, someone will have to do the cleaning. She is unable to use a rag or towel or cleaning products. She is basically helpless. She can only make the mess, not clean it up. Someone bigger, smarter, and more skilled than her has to keep her living space clean.

Again, it hit me that is exactly what I depend on with the Lord. As I said, I have made lots of messes, and nothing I can do will change that. Some of these mistakes are long-lasting, with long-lasting effects. When I come across another mess I have made, I have to turn to the only One who can clean up after me. “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15–16). When I need mercy and grace, I turn to the Lord—the only one who can deal with my mess. Like the tax collector, I need the Lord to make things right. “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’” (Luke 18:13).

An important lesson I need to learn from my aging cat is the realization that my messes are as gross and disgusting to God as hers are to me. I need to remember that I can live with the Lord only because of His grace and mercy. When I recall that, I will be much more patient with those around me. Do others make messes? Do they sin and cause problems? Yes. But, my mess is no better or easier to clean than theirs. All of us are messy, all of us need a Savior to clean up after us.

SHE IS ALWAYS LOVED

Maui can be a real pain. Sometimes when we feed her she turns up her nose and refuses to eat what we have given her. Sometimes it is food she had eaten for years and suddenly she won’t touch it. I know cats can be picky, but it is frustrating to provide your best and have her to turn up her nose and reject it. After an hour of cleaning up her messes, more than once I have been put out with her.

But, after a while, she will come and crawl into my lap and purr. I will rub her ears and hold her and everything feels good again. The fact is, troubles, messes, pickiness—I love my old cat.

The good news here is that God is the same with every one of us. If you are a Christian, you know well how much God loves you. “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9–10). God has proven His love for you. And the good news for us as Christians is that love is stronger than all the enemy can throw at us. “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

If you are not a Christian, God still loves you in spite of all the sins you have committed, in spite of all the mistakes you have made, and in spite of all the messes you have left behind. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:16–17). God loved you enough to send His Son to save you. He does not desire your punishment. Just as I love my old cat and would not hurt her for the world, neither does God want to condemn you. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).



You can count on the love of God. If I, being a human, can love a silly cat unconditionally, is it hard to think that a loving God feels so strongly for you? God loves you and desires your salvation. Put your faith in Christ, turn from your sin and be clothed with Him in baptism. You will experience a joy, a love, a blessing greater than anything you can imagine. My cat is just a cat, but you matter to God. He loves you and wants to save you.

DOES GOD EXIST? 2015 Canyonlands Tour

WHEN: August 23–28, 2015

WHERE: Leaving from and returning to Flagstaff, Arizona.

PROVIDED & INCLUDED:

All transportation Monday through Friday from Flagstaff and return via air-conditioned motor coach.

All lodging at the motels includes breakfast beginning Monday at 6:00 a.m. through Friday at 6:00 p.m.

All park entry fees and all educational materials.

Tour Captain, from our travel partner QueensLander Worldwide Tours, who will provide logistics and on-site support.

NOT PROVIDED:

Lunches and dinners

Gratuities for Driver and Tour Captain.

Souvenirs and items of a personal nature.

COST: \$879.00 per person based on double occupancy.



Sunset Crater



Grand Canyon



Bryce Canyon



Zion Canyon

Since 1988, we have conducted educational tours of the Canyonlands. Our next tour is set for August 23–28, 2015. We will be visiting Sunset Crater, the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion Canyon, Lake Powell, Meteor Crater, The Painted Desert, and The Petrified Forest. Lectures by John Clayton and Alan Doty will be conducted onboard the coach as we travel from one site to the next. Then in-the-field visits will be made to the places discussed. This is a trip for Christians that will feature devotional messages, singing/worship, and Bible study, as well as lessons in science. We will enjoy the beauty of God’s creation and learn about God’s methods and how the evidence supports the integrity of God’s Word.

College credit will be available on an arranged basis with this year’s trip. This will be handled by York College, in York, Nebraska. For information on credits, grading, and tuition please contact York College at 402-363-5621.



Lake Powell



Petrified Forest

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit our website:
www.CanyonLands2015.com



Or contact QueensLander Tours:
Toll-free: 877-865-6711
or by e-mail at Go@QLTours.com.

Or contact John Clayton:
269-687-9426
or by e-mail at jncdge@aol.com.

GREAT SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's Note: There are many writers who claimed that good scientists and intelligent, well-educated people do not believe in God. This simply is not true. Tihomir Dimitrov (<http://nobelists.net>) has been researching the statements of the greatest scientists of all time, and we are reproducing some of their statements in this column.

ERNST BORIS CHAIN

1906-1979

1948 Nobel Prize for Discovery of Penicillin



“I have said for years that speculations about the origin of life lead to no useful purpose as even the simplest living system is far too complex to be understood in terms of the extremely primitive chemistry scientists have used in their attempts to explain the unexplainable that happened billions of years ago. God cannot be explained away by such naive thoughts.”

“It must be remembered that, quite apart from the ephemeral nature of scientific theories, our science is ethically neutral. No value of good or bad is attached to any natural constant, or, for that matter, any scientific observation in any field. However, in our relations to our fellow man—and this includes in particular, the applications of scientific research—we must be guided by an ethical code of behavior, and pure science cannot provide it.

In the search for an ethical code of behavior we have to look for more lasting values than scientific discoveries or theories. The Jewish people have had the extraordinary privilege to have a lasting code of ethical values in the divinely inspired laws of Judaism which have become the basic pillars of the Western world.”

“I would rather believe in fairies than in such wild speculation as the materialistic theory of evolution.

It may be amusing for those engaged in the task to describe their fellow man as naked apes, and the less discriminating section of the public may enjoy reading about comparisons between the behavior of apes and man, but this approach—which, by the way, is neither new nor original—does not really lead us very far.”

Cynthia's Corner

BLESSINGS OF FAMILY



During the holidays, we usually get together with family and loved ones. Whether our families are large, small, dysfunctional, disagreeable, or loving, supportive and nurturing, or a combination of these and other attributes, these are the relationships that teach us the most about ourselves. They know us better than anyone else. Sometimes family members can be brutally honest; but, we can learn and grow from that if we choose to.

I think we show our true colors within the family when we “let our hair down.” This is why God says that a shepherd of the church “must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)” (1 Timothy 3:4-5, NIV 1984). Who we really are inside, and what our character is made of, is seen within the family walls. If you want to judge or evaluate how Christlike you are, ask your family! Or, if you can be honest with yourself, look at how you treat them and how you behave at home.

If we really have the Spirit of Christ within us, and if we are trying to follow that Spirit, it will be evident in how we act at home. Are we “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19)? Wives, do you have a “gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:4) and do you show your husband respect (Ephesians 5:33)? Husbands, do you love your wives sacrificially (Ephesians 5:25 – 30) and are you considerate (1 Peter 3:7) and not harsh with them or your children (Colossians 3:19, 21)? Are we kind, gentle, patient, and compassionate toward all (especially to our family), and do we forgive others as we want God to forgive us (Colossians 3:12, 13)?

—Cynthia Clayton

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:12 – 13 (NIV)

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

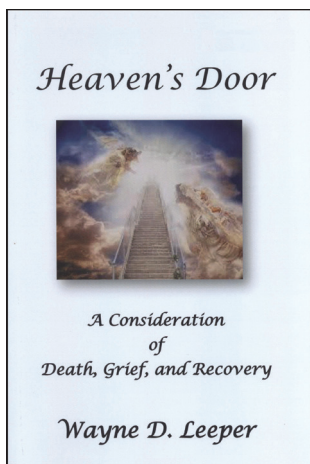




The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

Heaven's Door

by Wayne Leeper, ©2013, 36 pages (paperback)
Available from Wayne Leeper at 1711 Hollow Oak Drive,
Lebanon, TN 37087 or wleeper@gmail.com



If you have ever wanted to send someone who just lost a loved one an attractive little booklet that is designed to use the Bible as a source of comfort and encouragement, this new work by Wayne Leeper will be of interest to you. It only has 36 pages, and it is not an apologetic, but it is a high quality, attractive little book designed to give “A consideration of death, grief, and recovery” (the subtitle of the book).

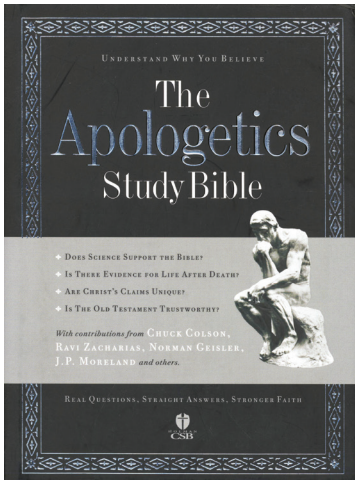
What Leeper has done is to collect comments by well-known people, scriptures from the Bible, and personal suggestions by himself to comfort and encourage people in times of grief and loss. Having suffered this in the death of my wife in 2008, I can see the value of such a booklet. It is attractive and printed on high-quality paper.

In the first 26 pages of the book Leeper discusses different aspects of life and death from Scripture. In the last nine pages he traces life from birth to childhood to young adulthood and then marriage, parenthood, middle age, retirement, death, and eternity. He gives the Christian view of how we go through the process of life and into eternity. It is beautifully written, sensitive, and biblical in its development.

This is a book for Christians who are in the trauma of losing someone they love, but it will be useful and encouraging to any believer contemplating life and death.

The Apologetics Study Bible

General Editor Ted Cabal, Holman Bible Publishers, ©2012
2048 pages, \$39.99 (hard cover), ISBN 978-1433602856



The best way to describe this book is to say it is a modern translation of the Bible, with over 100 articles by various scholars addressing topics related to apologetics. Included in these articles are explanations of questions in apologetics, useful charts, and exposés of those the authors consider to be in error. The writers of these articles are well-known names in modern apologetics—Habermas, Hanegraaff, Moreland, Geisler, Copan, Zacharias, McDowell, Johnson, Strobel, and Craig, just to list a few of the over 100 article writers. The articles deal with a huge range of subjects. Things like the age

of the earth are treated fairly even-handedly without taking a strong position. Exposés of other religions are accurate though superficial, and cover everything from Bahá'í to Christian Science. Philosophical issues such as Postmodernism, “Can God Create a Stone Too Heavy for Him to Lift?” and “the Laws of logic” are explained well. Moral issues such as abortion, demon possession, and cloning are treated delicately.

The greatest weakness of the book is in its treatment of doctrinal issues. A huge percentage of the authors have Baptist church connections and are teachers in Baptist-associated seminaries and colleges. That means their doctrine causes a heavy bias against understandings that differ from the teachings of mainline Baptists. Readers from the Restoration Movement will struggle with things such as the claim that baptism is not essential to salvation, which is included in the “Twisted Scripture” section. Also included in this section are the teachings of Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses. The “Plan of Salvation” on page xxiv, built on the acrostic use of the word “FAITH” will disturb many people not associated with the Baptist church.

We recommend this book to preachers, college students, and people deep into apologetics as a useful reference. It covers such a wide range of subjects that it will give you a broad resource on many things related to apologetics. Like any book, you have to do some sorting and discarding of teachings that are denominationally linked to the beliefs of the writers and editors.

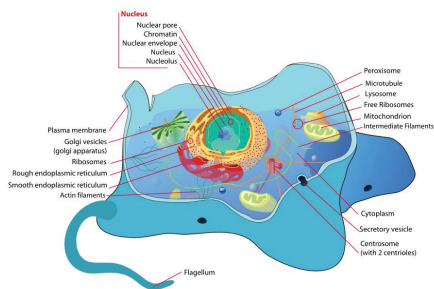
DANDY DESIGNS

PROTEOMES

The Human Genome Project has spawned a whole new field of research on the biochemistry of the human body. In 1994, Dr. Mark Wilson coined the word “proteome” combining proteins and genome. Proteomes are a collection of proteins found in a particular cell type which tell the cell what to do. Genes determine many of the characteristics of an organism, and they do so by providing instructions for making proteins which are the building blocks and workhorses of the cells. Dr. Akhilesh Pandey of Johns Hopkins University and founder and director of the Institute of Bioinformatics explained this as follows: “You can think of the human body as a huge library where each protein is a book. The difficulty is that we don’t have a comprehensive catalog that gives us the titles of the available books and where to find them.”

Pandey’s team has identified proteins encoded by 17,294 genes which is about 84% of all the genes in the human genome. In their research Pandey’s team found 193 proteins whose data patterns did not fit any cell’s coding. These have been labeled “noncoding.” Pandey says this “means we don’t fully understand how cells read DNA.” He goes on to say that the human proteome is so extensive and complex that the researchers’ catalog of it will never be fully complete.

If we think of the human body as a library and each protein as a book, it should be pretty obvious that this is not the result of any chance process. Libraries are complex and designed and require great skill and organizing ability. Books are written by people with intelligence—they are not a chance collection of words. Being able to cure genetic diseases means learning how to read the books recorded in the library. God has written more than one book. His instruction book for us, the Bible, shows the same complexity and intelligence that we see in the genome. It reminds of us David’s statement, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:14). Source: *John Hopkins Medicine* via <http://www.biosciencetechnology.com/news/2014/05/human-proteome-project-finds-193-previously-unknown-proteins?type=cta>.



Animal Cell Structure

THE SECRET OF STICKY FEET



For years scientists have been trying to figure out the gecko's amazing ability to climb walls. Geckos can climb vertically up a shiny steel surface. They can even walk upside down on a Teflon surface, which is supposed to be a material

that nothing sticks to. How do these lizards do it? Scientists still do not agree, even though they have studied gecko feet for years.

In 1934 a German scientist wondered if the adhesion was caused by electrostatic forces. He performed an experiment that seemed to indicate that was not the explanation. He used X-rays to attempt to neutralize static charges of a gecko climbing a metal wall. The gecko continued to stick to the wall.

Back in 2000 a pair of studies seemed to indicate the geckos use van der Waals forces for their grip. Van der Waals are weak forces between the molecules of surfaces that touch each other. Geckos have very tiny toe hairs called "setae" that allow this super-gripping power. The idea was that molecules in those hairs grip the surface molecules of the material the gecko is climbing.

A 2014 study by Hadi Izadi, a chemical engineer at Yale University, suggests that it may be an electrostatic force after all. Testing the gecko on two different surface materials indicated that geckos have twice the gripping power on Teflon as on silicone rubber. If the grip were from van der Waals forces, it should have been the same on both surfaces. Since the grip was not the same, the researchers believe that van der Waals does not explain it. Then they found that when the gecko's toe pads came in contact with the surfaces, electrons jumped from the gecko's setae to the surface. This created a positive charge on the gecko's foot and a negative charge on the surface. Since opposite charges attract, the researchers concluded that electrostatic force must be how the gecko sticks to the surface.

But wait a minute! Other scientists pointed out that a gecko can stick to bare steel where an electrical charge would not accumulate. So perhaps geckos use more than one method to perform their apparent magic. Brilliant scientists have spent years trying to figure out the amazing ability of these fascinating creatures. Maybe some day they will be able to fully explain what God did in this "dandy design." Source: *Science News*, August 9, 2014, page 19.



Gecko on Glass

News and Notes

MORALITY AND FAITH. Can you be a moral person if you are an atheist, or is faith necessary to be moral? This has been highly debated, and books have been written on this subject. When I was an atheist I would argue loud and long that I was as moral as anyone else, and I have atheist friends who are very moral. The question is more about motivation and whether there is any really compelling reason for a person to deny himself a pleasure if he has no higher power to answer to. *Christianity Today* added a new twist to this discussion in their June 2014 issue (page 18) by publishing a study showing the views of various nations on this issue. Ninety-nine percent of people in Indonesia said belief in God was necessary to be moral. In China only 14% said that was true and France was close behind China at 15%. In the U.S. 53% of people said belief in God was essential.

WICCAN DISINVITED FROM LEADING PRAYER. The Huntsville, Alabama, City Council invited Reverend Blake Kirk, a Wiccan priest, to give the invocation at their June 26 meeting. When that was publicized, people objected and the council told him not to come. Unfortunately today the idea of opening public programs with a prayer is a disaster waiting to happen. There are a large number of fringe religious groups that can use that platform to promote their views and/or agendas and obscene and profane prayers are always a possibility. Kirk made a valid point when he said, “The city cannot pick and choose what faiths they want to support and allow to speak and give the prayer.” Source: *Dallas Morning News*, June 28, 2014, page 9A.

COGNITIVE SCIENTISTS SAY FAITH IS HARD-WIRED. One of the areas of discussion between atheists and believers is the question of why do people believe in God? Atheists maintain faith is a crutch, and that religion started when people did not understand the things around them and they invented gods to do the explaining. This “god of the gaps” explanation certainly has been true in some cases. However, the prevalence of faith in western cultures does not seem to support it universally. Nury Vittachi, a cognitive scientist, maintains that our brains are hard-wired with “a metaphysical outlook

... so deeply ingrained in human thought processes that it cannot be expunged.” Anthropologist Pascal Boyer noted that atheists have many “religious ideas” but that they do not recognize them as such. Boyer says “we are born believers.” Source: *The Week*, July 18, 2014.

DINOSAURS WERE MESOTHERMS. One of the ongoing debates about the dinosaurs involves whether they were warm-blooded or cold-blooded. NPR recently reported on a new study which seems to shed some light on this area. Warm-blooded animals like birds and mammals metabolize their food about ten times faster



than cold-blooded animals do. Dr. John Grady at the University of New Mexico has been studying the metabolism rates of dinosaurs using growth rings, and he finds that the dinosaurs were right in the middle of these metabolic rates—about 5 times faster than reptiles. This seems to indicate that the dinosaurs may have been

a unique species, perhaps not related to either warm-blooded or cold-blooded animals. Being in the middle contributed to their ability to survive in the ancient world for so long. Source: *The Week*, July 4, 2014, page 17.

COSMOS II. In our July/August 2014 issue we reported on a remake of the television series *Cosmos*. The original series with the late scientist and secular humanist Carl Sagan began with the statement that “The cosmos is all there is or ever was or ever will be.” That is obviously a philosophical statement rather than a scientific statement. The new *Cosmos* series was created by Sagan’s wife Ann Druyan, along with Seth McFarlane and astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. All three of these people have a very strong secular, naturalist bias to say the least. After being shown extensively on TV, the series is now available for schools to use in science classes. The program uses wonderful graphics and simulations, and Tyson is smooth and articulate in his presentations. The same weaknesses that were in the first *cosmos* series are present in this one. Things that are possible are presented as factual. Things that are unlikely and statistically beyond what most people would accept as reasonable, are glossed over and accepted as having happened. Naturalism is presented as the only approach to understanding, when in fact enormous faith is required to accept the explanation given. It is important to understand that this

series is a defense of modern evolutionary thought with a very heavy bias. It is not a documentary of known facts.

ATHEIST CHURCHES ON THE RISE. Two years ago we mentioned in this column that an atheist church had been started in Houston called “Houston Oasis.” This movement started in London with a group called “Sunday Assembly” which claims to have 100 assemblies in 15 countries with a dozen operating in the United States. These atheist churches are functioning in Lake Charles, Louisiana; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Kansas City, Missouri; and Rochester, New York to a great enough extent that *Time* magazine ran a special article on them in their August 4, 2014, issue (page 52). The basic argument for these “churches” is that they offer moral and social support to people who are nonbelievers. The buzz word now is that these groups will help atheists “come out of the closet.” Sound familiar?

RAELISM AND THE SPACE AGE. Wikipedia lists 59 religions that were created between 1970 and 2007. One of the most popular was begun by Claude Vorilhon who named himself Rael, which in Hebrew is “messenger.” Vorilhon claims to have been contacted by aliens who visited the earth 25,000 years ago and called themselves “The Elohim” (the Hebrew word for God). Vorilhon’s book is titled *The Book Which Tells the Truth*. Raelism is a strange mixture of bad science and bad theology, but it has gained quite a following. Many biblical events are referenced, including the transfiguration, the flood of Noah, and the Exodus. Vorilhon exhibits many attributes of a cult figure including a variety of sexual expressions and the solicitation of money. He says he needs 20 million dollars to build a home for the aliens when they return.

EXTRASOLAR PLANET CLAIM DEBUNKED. In 2007 a group of planets was found to be orbiting a star named Gliese 581. One of the planets discovered seemed capable of supporting life. In 2010 another planet named Gliese 581g was claimed by its discoverer to be inhabited. Steven Vogt of the University of California, Santa Cruz said, “The chances of life on this planet are 100 percent.” It has now been discovered that magnetic activity on the star Gliese 581 caused the observations that were said to be planets, and in fact, the planets do not exist. The star is 20 light years from us, and while that is not very far, astronomically



speaking, it does make observations tentative at best. Certainly many of the observations of extrasolar planets are valid. However, the wild speculations by the press about how many planets exist orbiting other stars, and what percentage of them would have conditions conducive to life, need to be taken very lightly. Newer instruments will answer the questions, and the existence of life elsewhere is not an issue as far as God's existence is concerned. Jumping to conclusions misleads the public. Source: *Science News*, August 9, 2014, page 11.

RETHINKING HELL. One of the areas of biblical understanding that is constantly debated is the nature of hell. The notion that someone is burned eternally for not obeying a command of God he did not know about (like the person in Africa who never heard of God or the Bible), is a favorite complaint of atheists who wish to discredit Christianity. In July 2014, a conference titled “Rethinking Hell” was held at Houston’s Lanier Theological Library. One of the main contributors was Edward Fudge who has written several books on the subject. Fudge rejects the traditional view of eternal torment, and the universalist view that hell reforms people. He maintains what he calls the “conditional immortality” view that those who are not saved are destroyed. Fudge’s main book on this is *The Fire That Consumes*. It was published in 1982 and is very heavy to read. From an apologetic standpoint, his view makes sense, but it is controversial. No matter what hell is like, the main point is that we do not want to go there.

ATHEIST EXAGGERATION MAKES LAW SOUND BAD. On March 25, 1965, a law identified as “House Bill 1020” was enacted in Oregon. The law stated that interested parents could apply to have their child removed from the public school classroom for up to two hours a week for elementary school students, and five hours a week for high school students to attend weekday schools giving instruction in religion. Hemant Mehta, whose pen name is “The Friendly Atheist,” has made a widely publicized statement, “In Oregon, students are skipping math class to learn about the Bible.” What most schools in Oregon have done to comply with the law, is to allow students to leave the school one hour before the end of the school day to go to the religious classes. As a public school teacher, I can tell you that the last hour of the day frequently gets used to accommodate whatever is going on—pep assemblies, convocations, student special events, etc. If a kid happened to have math the last hour of the day, Mehta’s statement would be accurate, but the actual number of kids who would miss a math class would be very, very small. Source: *Austin American Statesman*, May 18, 2014, page E2.

MAN-MADE EARTHQUAKES. Oklahoma has not been a state known to have large numbers of earthquakes. Prior to 2008 only one or two earthquakes were measured in Oklahoma, and they were very small in magnitude—level 1 or 2 which would not be detected by people on the surface. So far in 2014 Oklahoma has had over 200 earthquakes. In 2011 there was a 5.6 quake, the largest recorded in state history. The likely cause of this huge upswing is that oil and gas companies get rid of the brine that comes out with oil and gas when they are removed from the ground by pumping it into the ground at other sites. Pumping millions of barrels of wastewater into the ground under high pressure is likely to cause movement of whatever faults exist. Never underestimate man's ability to cause problems for himself, but this probably will not be stopped until some serious damage results. Source: *Science News*, August 9, 2014, page 13.

BILL NYE MAKES THE COVER OF POPULAR SCIENCE.

We mentioned the debate that took place between Bill Nye (the science guy) and Ken Ham (the Creation Museum preacher) in our May/June 2014 issue. The debate was a farce and was bad public relations for believers in God. Even Pat Robertson said, "Let's be real, let's not make a joke of ourselves ..." as he distanced himself from the debate. Atheists on the other hand, have used it to promote the idea that you have to be ignorant and opposed to science and progress to be a Christian. The September 2014 issue of *Popular Science* has a picture of Bill Nye wearing prize fight wraps along with two full page pictures inside saying, "Bill Nye will save science in America." Nye has become the new poster child for atheism by lumping all believers in the camp of dispensationalists like Ken Ham. We continue to make our plea that science and faith are friends, not enemies and you do not have to put your brain in park to be a Christian.

WHERE DOES OUTER SPACE BEGIN? The sun's influence goes far out into space to a region called the heliosphere. When Voyager 1 reached this area on August 25, 2012, it was predicted that the magnetic field of outer space would be detected and that it would be the opposite in polarity of the sun's magnetic field. This outer space area was predicted to be made of interstellar particles repelled by the sun's field. So far none of these predictions has turned out to be true, meaning that the sun's influence goes much further than predicted. Many scientific theories are based on assumptions about our solar system. As we gain more knowledge those assumptions are being shown to be incorrect. One scientist said, "This whole region is a lot messier than anyone dreamed of." The complexity of the creation continues to amaze us. Source: *Science News*, August 23, 2014, page 6.

As we come to the end of another year,
 all of us at the DOES GOD EXIST?
 ministry want to thank you for your
 support and encouragement. We wish
 you a very merry Christmas and the
 blessings of God in the new year.



2015



*John and Cynthia Clayton
 Roland Earnst
 Linda Glover
 Karl Marcussen*

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Signed—Karl H. Marcussen, Managing Editor, October 6, 2014

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