

DOES GOD EXIST?

A large cruise ship is docked at a pier. The ship is white with a dark hull and has a prominent upper deck with a glass-enclosed structure. The name 'WATERLOO' is visible on the side of the ship. In the foreground, several people are walking along the pier, which is separated from the water by a chain-link fence. The sky is blue with some clouds.

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

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LESSONS FROM A CRUISE SHIP

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Lessons from a Cruise Ship



On March 3, 2018, my wife and I boarded a cruise ship for an eight-day “free” cruise leaving from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We had “won” the free trip by our participation in a high-pressure sales pitch for a timeshare. I was a reluctant participant in getting on a boat along with 3,000 other people to see places in the eastern Caribbean where I had never been before. Everything in life is a learning experience, and this trip was no exception. Here are a few lessons I learned from a cruise ship:

NUMBER 1: MOVING A HUGE OBJECT IN A POSITIVE WAY REQUIRES A LOT OF PEOPLE.

Our ship was called the *Crown Princess*. The vessel weighed 226 million pounds, was 952 feet long, 195 feet tall, had 19 decks and accommodated 3,200 passengers. How do you move and control such an enormous object, especially when any small mistake would be catastrophic when the ship is docking? The answer to that is to have massive power at your disposal, a plan designed by a knowledgeable source, and workers who work together to implement the plan. In the case of the *Crown Princess*, there were two electric propulsion motors, six Siemens power generators, four V16 diesel engines, and two V12 diesel engines providing the power. Twelve hundred crew members were the workers who were trained to do their jobs with many holding advanced college degrees on how to do them.



LESSON: The church has all the tools to change the world and solve its problems. The job is massive, but we have a plan designed by the Supreme Intelligence of the universe. We have the power from God to change people’s lives, but we have to apply that power in the way it was designed to work. We have the workers, all of whom have “spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 12), if we will just work together. The ship only got docked when all workers did their job. We need not to wring our hands or cry at the magnitude of the challenge. God is our captain, and he will bring our task to successful fruition.

NUMBER 2: MOVING A HUGE OBJECT REQUIRES INCREDIBLE AMOUNTS OF TIME AND PATIENCE.

Watching the colossal ship dock is a long, tedious process. A



226 million pound object in motion has a massive amount of momentum. Bumping into something even at low speed would be catastrophic. Once the ship gets within a few miles of its docking place, it begins slowing down. As it enters the harbor, it is barely moving at all. Imagine the time it takes to position a planet in its

“docking place” around the Sun! Imagine the time involved in producing enough petroleum products to support the human population on Earth.

LESSON: Humans tend to want instant gratification, but God “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Human denominational traditions try to limit God to a specific amount of time for the creation itself when the biblical record is undated and untimed and the creation week is just a snippet of the total creation process. The evidence shows that God has been working patiently over a very long time to prepare the Earth and its resources to make our existence possible.



Top: © NAN728; bottom: © forplayday. Images from BigStockPhoto.com.

NUMBER 3: THE JOURNEY IS IMPORTANT AND REQUIRES VAST RESOURCES TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIP.

Imagine the cost of building such a huge ship which includes



1,538 cabins, a theater, four swimming pools, and a dozen eating establishments. What is the purpose of all of this? The obvious answer is to make money. Investors put in a great deal of money believing that by making the ship so enormous and spectacular they

could not only gain back their original investments but a great deal more in profits. There is great risk involved. Hurricanes, accidents, terrorism, depressions, recessions, world conflict, and a host of other things can cause a huge ship to be a total loss. The recreation industry is a vast, worldwide business with massive financial fortunes made and lost on a regular basis.

LESSON: Christianity is very similar, and individual Christians are called upon to make a massive investment in the Christian journey. The purpose of the Christian life justifies the huge investment that it demands. Jesus indicated this when he said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate [love less] father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, even their own life — such a person cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Paul said in Philipians 3:8–9, “I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.”

The Christian journey demands more than what is invested in a cruise ship because its importance is so much greater. You can lose financially by investing in a cruise ship, but you can start over and rebuild your lost financial life. The Christian journey is lifelong and is irreversible. It involves every part of your being and extends beyond this life.



THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CRUISE SHIP AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE GUARANTEED RESULTS OF THE JOURNEY.

The success of the cruise ship is not just whether it makes money. Most cruise ships must be rebuilt or destroyed within a decade or two because of deterioration and competition. There is a constant need to pour money into the ship by adding entertainment and new attractions like gambling and zip lines. Even if a person is 100% successful and makes a fortune on his or her investment, all you have is money and what money can buy.

The Christian life is the complete opposite in all of that. Instead of destroying lives and families, which the recreational industry can do, Christianity brings love and peace and healing to those its journey affects. The rewards involved in choosing to be a Christian are not financial. When the Bible speaks of the rewards, it speaks of peace, joy, and contentment with what you have. It speaks of love, fellowship, and freedom from the destructive elements of this world. The ultimate reward of choosing to be a Christian is that one's life and existence does not become dated or plagued with competition.

For the Christian, this life is but a snippet of existence. Even death is not the end, but rather the beginning of a better existence. Revelation 21:1 – 5 describes it, telling us the Earth we now live on will pass away and that God will dwell with those who chose to be Christians. It tells us that all the bad things we experience now will no longer exist. It tells us that there will be no more tears, “no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” God promises us, “I am making everything new!”

—John N. Clayton





In my lifetime I have seen many different kinds of prejudice. When I was a very small child, I remember my father awakening me in the middle of the night to show me something. He carried me down to the living room and sat me down so that I could look out the front window. In our front yard, there was a cross which was in flames. People wearing white hoods and robes were walking around the burning cross angrily shaking their fists at our front door. You see, my father was a white professor teaching at Talladega State Teacher's College, an all-black college in Talladega, Alabama. My father said to me, "See, this is what Christianity is all about, branding people who do what you don't understand with blind hatred and anger." That image and that experience have stuck with me for over 70 years. One of the reasons is that I see it reinforced on a daily basis by people who claim to be Christians.

Not long ago I received a phone call from a distressed 80-year-old woman who is a retired science teacher, the widow of a church elder, and a lady with a half-century experience of teaching children in Bible school. She had offered to teach a Sunday morning Bible class in her home congregation, but they refused her that privilege. The reason for their refusal was, "You aren't much of a Christian because you believe in evolution." Not long after that conversation, I had a lady call me in tears because she had been removed from

SCIENCE AND EVOLUTION ARE NOT DIRTY WORDS.

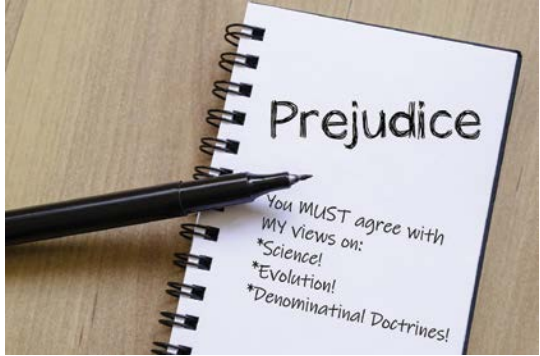
teaching second graders because, "You believe in science." My personal experience has been the same as what those Christian ladies have experienced. Like them, I have been branded.

Nearly every day I run into some kind of accusation that lets me know I am discredited because I believe in science and because I freely say "I believe in evolution." A recent caller explained to me

why I was not invited to participate in a summer retreat program, and his exact words were, “You have been branded as a believer in science instead of a Christian.” There are so many problems with all of this that it is hard to know where to start. One of the major factors in young people turning away from Christ and the church is that they want no part of an institution that allows what I have described above to take place. Here are just a few problems for all of us to consider:

1. THE MEAN-SPIRITED ATTITUDE OF THOSE WHO HOLD SUCH PREJUDICED VIEWS HAS NO PART IN THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF CHRISTIANITY.

In the first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he says: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all” (verse 6). The legalistic view that science is evil



and does not help Christians understand how God works, conflicts with much of the Bible. More to the point, it violates how we are to approach one another when we have disagreements. The method and spirit of Matthew 18:15–20 seem to be alien to many of us.

2. “SCIENCE” IS NOT A DIRTY WORD.

Science is simply knowledge, and no one can deny that knowledge is critical to understanding. The Greek word for science is “*gnosis*” and is used one time in the New Testament, and that is 1 Timothy 6:20. That verse does not condemn science, but it does condemn false science or “godless chatter” with opposing ideas. Romans 1:18–20 tells us that we can gain knowledge of God from the things he has made, and that knowledge is science. When people are told “you just have to believe” they are being told something that is increasingly difficult in our world today. It is also something neither Jesus nor the apostles demanded. Paul



used science (knowledge) repeatedly in his evangelism, and most if not all of Jesus' parables depended upon knowledge.

3. "EVOLUTION" IS NOT A DIRTY WORD.

Saying one does not believe in evolution to young people today is a statement of such ignorance that further discussion is almost useless. The word "evolution" means an unfolding type of change. We use the word in describing politics, construction, history, economics, medical



treatment, education, and especially in agriculture and biology. Who would deny that dogs like the cockapoo, peekapoo, cockapoodle, etc., have evolved? How can anyone dealing with the flu virus, with insect infestations, or varieties of roses or corn or apples deny that change takes place? People attach adjectives to the word evolution to avoid these problems, but macro- or micro- have blurred limits. The real issue is "naturalism" which is a belief system that attempts to remove God from a causal role in these things. My dear sister in Christ who taught the Bible for decades was told she was not much of a Christian because she believes things change. The word for that is "branding."

4. BRANDING IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE DENOMINATIONAL PERVERSION OF THE GOSPEL AND DIVISION IN THE CHURCH.

It is hard to read Romans 14 and not shudder at what has happened to the Lord's church. Instead of preaching the "Good News," we have absorbed ourselves with denominational questions. Dispensationalism and its political agenda and millennialism with its end times propaganda have brought teachings into the church that oppose science. They also demand constrictive time elements to history and creation and promote conflict involving Christians in verbal if not physical warfare.

Philippians 2:1 – 15 gives us a picture of the unity God wants us to have. When we focus on Jesus Christ and the good news about God restoring us to the relationship we all need and want, we approach the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17:11 – 23. Branding has no place Christ's church.

— JNC





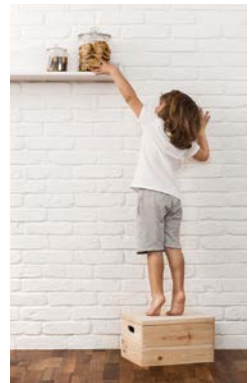
THREE VIEWS OF LIFE

One of the most familiar parables in the Bible is the story of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10:30–37. It is amazing how relevant that parable is to what is going on in the world today. In the parable there are three views of life demonstrated by Jesus. The first view is, “What’s yours is mine, so I’ll take it,” represented by the robbers. The second view is, “What’s mine is mine and I’ll keep it,” represented by a priest and a Levite. The third view is, “What’s mine is yours, so I’ll share it,” represented by a Samaritan.

WHAT’S YOURS IS MINE, SO I’LL TAKE IT.

The robbers in the parable are different from some of today’s robbers in that what they did was condemned by their society. In today’s world, the underlying philosophy of “what’s yours is mine, so I’ll take it” is embodied in the way people apply the concept of “survival of the fittest.” Stealing with computers is commonplace in our world today. People in the music business will tell you that society as a whole accepts the notion that it is okay to steal from their creative ability in music. Those who are more fit in their computer skills use computers for personal gain at the expense of others. Computer scams are a threat to all of us, especially those who are older and lack the skills needed to avoid having things stolen from them.

This applies to so many areas of our lives. Robbers use computers to damage someone’s reputation (Proverbs 22:1), take advantage of someone’s age or inability to understand



Top: © Kwanchai.c; bottom: © Rangjazz. Images from BigStockPhoto.com.

financial schemes, or to cheat on their taxes (Romans 13:6–7). The modern-day view is that it’s okay if you can get away with it. Many of us have been scammed in everything from time-shares to insurance promises by those who live by this view of life.

WHAT’S MINE IS MINE AND I’LL KEEP IT.

The real villains in this parable are religious leaders. The priest and the Levite both knew what the Law of Moses taught, but they used their religion to hang on to what they had. They did their giving only when there were spectators. Jesus talked about that in Mat-



thew 6:1–4. The priest and the Levite did not want to get their hands dirty, lose time, and get involved financially by helping a fellow Jew. Like some religious people today, they covered their selfishness with a holy pretense. Some have said that Satan is okay with God’s people just doing nothing bad as long as they do

not do much that is good. James 4:17 goes further by telling us that what the priest and the Levite did was sinful. In the judgment scene of Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus portrays salvation and condemnation as at least partially involved with what we do in situations where we can help someone.

WHAT’S MINE IS YOURS, SO I’LL SHARE IT.

It is easy to miss much of what is embedded in this parable. One thing we miss is the significance of the fact that the man who helped the injured Jew was a Samaritan. In John 4:7–9 we see Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman. She expresses amazement that Jesus would speak to her because she was a woman, and in that culture, men did not talk to women in public. More than that, she was a Samaritan, and the Bible comments, “For the Jews do not associate with Samaritans.” In our day of racial prejudice and ethnic conflict it should be easy to see that Jesus making



a Samaritan the hero of his parable would have been shocking to his Jewish listeners. Jesus presented the parable so well that the “expert on the law” drew the obvious conclusion without even reacting to the fact it was a Samaritan who rescued the injured Jewish man.

“What’s mine is yours” is the Christian view of life. Christians believe that everything they have is God’s, and sharing it has always been part of the Christian faith. Nowhere does the New Testament tell Christians a fixed percent or amount they must give. Instead, it tells us that “each of you should give, ... not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). As an atheist, it was always hard for me to understand how Christians could do so much without being forced to do so. My family’s view of life was survival of the fittest. Reducing your fitness by giving to someone else was unheard of.

Unfortunately, in recent years some religious leaders have used pressure techniques to force people to give. The biblical view is



“God gave this to me, and I WANT to share it with you.” We see the model of this view in Acts 2:44–45 where “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.” This is what they wanted to do, not what they were pushed

to do. In Acts 4:32–37 Joseph (Barnabas) sold property and turned the entire proceeds over to the apostles to meet the needs. He was known as “the son of encouragement” because he practiced the joy of sharing and giving which was part of his view of life.

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF LIFE?

Our culture tells us we must gain all we can and keep it. We have security systems, all kinds of insurance, and a constant push to buy “toys” ranging from boats to airplanes to time-shares to artwork to jewelry to luxurious homes. “Whoever has the most toys wins” is simply a statement of “what’s mine is mine and I’ll keep it.” Survival of the fittest becomes our moral standard, or perhaps we should say, the lack of a moral standard. Tragically it affects how you treat your spouse, your children, your friends, and your neighbors. Jesus would urge us to be the good Samaritan of his parable, and find the joy and fulfillment it brings to life. The other views bring misery and alienation in this life, and nothing to hope for when this life is over.

—JNC



AMERICA FOLLOWS ISRAEL'S DEPARTURE FROM GOD

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

—Jeremiah 2:13

A cistern is a huge underground jug used in desert areas to hold rainwater. If they leak, they are useless. Jeremiah gives five causes for ancient Israel leaving God. What is amazing is that America today is doing the same five things that Jeremiah discusses. Look at the relevance of this ancient prophet's warning.

1. THEY REFUSE TO LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD.

“To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it.” (Jeremiah 6:10). Jesus repeats this in Matthew 13:14–15: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”

Peter warned us in 2 Peter 3:3–5: “You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.” Romans 1:21–32 describes America today as there is continual effort to remove the Bible from all public places and all educational institutions.

2. THEY ARE OBSESSED WITH MATERIAL THINGS.

“From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit” (Jeremiah 6:13). Our culture rejects the wisdom of Luke 12:15 “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” The next six verses tell the story of the man tearing down his barns to build bigger ones to store possessions for himself. Then he dies, showing the futility of materialism. The warning follows “... this is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

As atheism grows in our country, people ridicule the message of 2 Corinthians 4:18–5:1: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built with human hands.”



3. THEY DELUDE THEMSELVES WITH FALSEHOODS.

“They dress up the wounds of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). It has been said that when people do not believe in something, they will believe anything. We regularly report on scams in this journal. Some are religious, and some are material. Ancient Israel was seeking false things. Isaiah says, “For these are rebellious people; deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD’s instructions. They say to the seers, ‘See no more visions!’ and to the prophets, ‘Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things’” (Isaiah 30:9–10).

In the New Testament, we see this challenge faced by the early church. Acts 8:9–11 tells us of a man named Simon who used magic and sorcery to gain a following. In Acts 17:18–21 we see philosophers spending all their time listening to the latest ideas. In Acts 19:13–16 we see religious charlatans conducting exorcisms. All of this is happening in the same way today and seems to fit the prediction of 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12: “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and

all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved.”

4. THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED AND COULD NOT BLUSH. Jeremiah 6:15 says: “Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush.” What does it take today to make people blush—to be embarrassed by what is taking place? I seriously doubt that most Americans can blush.

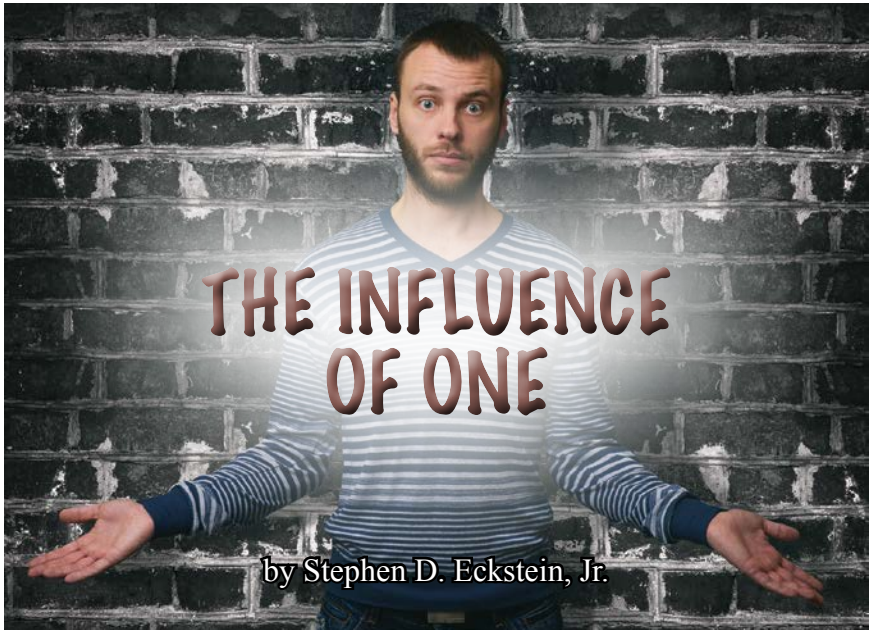
In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul was confronted with a situation where a member of the church was shackled up with his stepmother. Paul said to the congregation that they were “proud” (1 Corinthians 5:2) meaning they made a joke out of it. Ephesians 5:12 tells us, “It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.” In America today the word “shameful” has very little meaning to most people. Why did Adam and Eve try to hide from God in Genesis 3? We have come a long way in a bad direction in twenty-first century America. Philipians 3:19 describes us well: “Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.” In verse 18 Paul tells us, “many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.”

5. THEY REJECTED THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION. Jeremiah 6:16–19 tells them and us: “This is what the LORD says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said ‘We will not walk in it.’ ... ‘We will not listen.’ ... Hear, you earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law.” The “old paths” refers to what God has told us in his Word.

What can save America? As we plunge deeper and deeper into the pit of disbelief and greed, will the people of faith take seriously the work that is before us? Right now we seem as a people to fit the condemnation of Revelation 3:15: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. ... So because you are lukewarm—neither cold nor hot—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” Instead of being dictated to by the values of our culture, can we call people back to the standards of Jesus Christ?

Maybe like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11–32 our country can “come to itself” and reject the values around us. The politicians and philosophers will not fix what is wrong with our world. The only possible solution is the teaching and example of Jesus Christ taught in our homes and congregations and lived out in the lives of his disciples.

—JNC



The world has never been influenced by a group, but only by individuals. A group is composed of individuals, each of whom must act for him or herself. No one can act for you. Thus, no one should minimize any person, young or old, rich or poor, male or female. Each person wields an influence which is eternal in its reach and impact.

BAD

Adolph Hitler was once a babe in arms. Later, he became dictator of Germany and for twelve years changed the course of history. Directly and indirectly, he was responsible for the death of over 20 million people and the maiming and wounding of millions more in body and in mind. His decisions led to property loss in the trillions of dollars. His influence has affected directly or indirectly nearly every person alive today.

GOOD OR BAD

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. No one can measure the influence this instrument has exerted over our world. The number and kinds of calls made by people stagger the imagination. This scientific marvel is neutral. A person may use it to encourage the sick, talk to a loved one, convey the gospel of Christ, gossip about another, tempt one to sin, or threaten someone. How do you use the telephone?

GOOD

Abraham lived about 2000 B.C. Major events in his life are recorded in Genesis 12–25. The influence of this patriarch is evident as one reads the Bible. Fifteen Old Testament books and eleven in the New Testament refer to him. John 8, Acts 7, Romans 4, Galatians 3 and 4, Hebrews 7 and 11, relate his significance in the biblical message. If all the material in the Bible about Abraham were deleted, great gaps would appear in the text. Abraham exerted a powerful influence upon the world and still does through the biblical record. What kind of good impact do you have on people for the glory of GOD?

SINGLE BUT IMPORTANT IMPACT

After Joshua reprimanded Israel for serving other gods, he declared, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). Joshua’s choice has uplifted countless numbers of people.

Ruth, a Moabitess, chose God rather than idols and became a link in the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah. A Bible book bears her name. Her sister-in-law, Orpah, chose Moab and left no record other than her wrong decision (Ruth 1:14–18; 4:21; Matthew 1:5).

An unnamed captive Israelite girl changed the course of Naaman’s life by a few words to her mistress concerning a prophet who could cure leprosy (2 Kings 5:2–3).

Each choice we make will influence someone, even though the world may not know it. Perhaps you may not know it. God knows and will honor every cup of water given (Matthew 10:42). “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

A TREMENDOUS LASTING INFLUENCE

About A.D. 62, Paul wrote four letters while bound by chains and guarded by Roman soldiers. He had no idea that nineteen centuries later his letters, as part of the New Testament, would be translated into over 1,000 languages and be read by hundreds of millions of people all over the world. Nor did Tychicus, a beloved fellow servant, realize the importance of his ministry — to deliver the letters to their destinations (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7–9). Both writer and messenger had important tasks and far-reaching impacts.



THE GREATEST LIFE

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in human form, died on a cross for the sins of all people, was raised from the dead, and before ascending into heaven promised to come again. HIS life completely changed the course of human history; hopelessness into hope, death to life. “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know” is absolutely true to each child of God. If each Christian removed the name of Jesus every time he had read it in the Bible, in a paper or periodical, sung in a song, spoken in a word, or heard from another person, then great segments of one’s life would be radically altered. Every joint-heir of Christ will say, “Jesus has changed my life completely.”

Strangely, even non-Christians are profoundly influenced by GOD and JESUS. Why do people not swear and use profanity in the name of John Doe instead of in the name of our Creator and Savior? It is because GOD and JESUS are known as the greatest names in the world. The profane person supposedly fortifies his words by the vain use of the name of God and Christ.

The Christian recognizes the powerful influence of Jesus in such marvelous communication as these:

“There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature”
(2 Corinthians 5:17).

“God gave us eternal life and this life is in his son”
(1 John 5:11).

“For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).



THE CHALLENGE

If your name is in the Lamb’s book of Life, you will be saved (Philippians 4:3). No one can be saved or lost for you. It’s an individual matter. Choose Jesus today and every day. Let your life be a continual influence for HIM by “doing everything in the name of the LORD JESUS, giving thanks to GOD THE FATHER through HIM” (Colossians 3:17).

DOES GOD EXIST?

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SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's Note: Atheists attempt to suggest that scientists are intelligent people who have rejected faith and do not believe in God. The fact is that some of the most productive scientists who have ever lived were believers in God. We share some of their thoughts with you in this column.

ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879-1955) German-born Theoretical Physicist Developed the Theory of Relativity

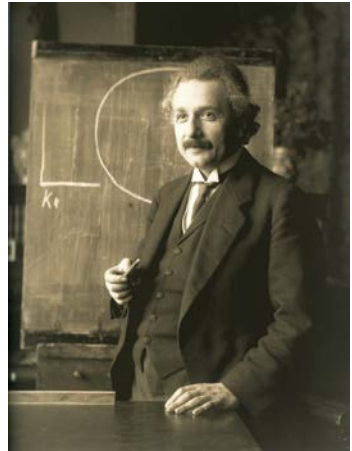
During an interview in 1929, Einstein was asked if he believed in God. This was his response:

“I’m not an atheist. The problem involved is too vast for our limited minds. We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library filled with books in many languages. The child knows someone must have written the books. It does not know how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child dimly suspects a mysterious order in the arrangement of the books but doesn’t know what it is. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human being toward God. We see the universe marvelously arranged and obeying certain laws but only dimly understand these laws.”

When asked if he accepted the historical existence of Jesus, he replied:

“Unquestionably! No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”

These quotations were taken from *Einstein: His Life and Universe* by Walter Isaacson, Simon and Schuster, © 2007, page 386.



Cynthia's Corner

FINDING A PURPOSE FOR HUMAN EXISTENCE



When God made man and woman, he told them to be fruitful and multiple, rule over the fish, the birds and every living creature (Genesis 1:28). “God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). After Adam and Eve sinned, they were banished from the garden and the ground was cursed. “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, ... for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19).

So, what is our lot in life? Is it simply to live, work, populate, and die? In Ecclesiastes, King Solomon (the wisest man: 1 Kings 4:29–34) searches for meaning in life. He says in 3:12, 13: “I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.” In 12:13 he says, “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of mankind.” I highly recommend reading and pondering all of Ecclesiastes.

Solomon was King David’s son and a believer in God. His conclusion to revere and obey God is different from that of a non-believer. If we do not believe in God, certainly we do not believe in life after death. If we live for this life only, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Corinthians 15:32). Without God, our purpose for existing changes dramatically. If our only happiness and fulfillment is in this brief span of time on Earth, why should we not get, consume, and do all we can for our immediate benefit and satisfaction? There really is no other meaning.

As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17, 19: “And if Christ has not been raised [meaning no life after death], your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” We believe God exists and he created us in his spiritual image (Genesis 1:26) with an eternal soul. He did this so that we will revere him and seek him (Ecclesiastes 3:11, 14; Jeremiah 29:11–13). We believe that the purpose for human existence is to seek God and be reconciled to him through his son, Jesus, and to live following his teachings and commands. We find joy, peace, love, and fulfillment in doing so, and we have the hope of eternity with God when our human existence ends (read 1 Corinthians 15). This belief fills our lives with purpose and hope.

—Cynthia Clayton

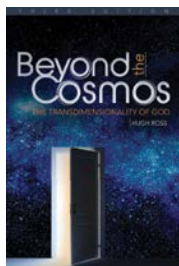
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The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

Beyond the Cosmos

by Hugh Ross, RTB Press; Third Edition © 2017,
233 pages, \$16.95 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-1886653221



Have you ever wondered how we can have free will if God is in control of all things and knows the future from the beginning? How can God hear the prayers of people all around the world at the same time? How can God allow evil in this world if he is all-powerful and all-loving? These are paradoxes that people ponder, and sometimes their failure to see a solution leads them to abandon their faith.

In this book, Hugh Ross deals with those questions and more. The subtitle is “The Transdimensionality of God,” and the solution to those problems lies in understanding what that means. We are limited to three physical dimensions plus a single time dimension. God is not so limited. Modern science tells us that there are more dimensions than the ones we can detect with our senses. Ross shows how science and Scripture explain the paradoxes that perplex us when we think about God. In fact, it is only through modern science that we can understand the truths that have been recorded in the Bible from ancient times.

Another faith challenge addressed in this book is how we can reconcile God’s love with the Christian doctrine of hell. How could God “tolerate, let alone create, a place or experience such as hell” and how can that fit with God’s omnipotence and perfect love?

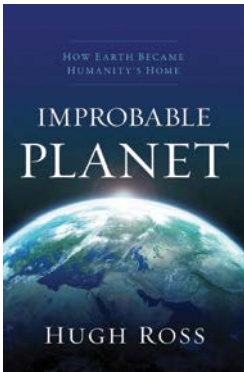
The description of the new creation in Revelation 21 also challenges our understanding. Ross explores that with a “New Creation Travelogue” to help us understand the great things God has planned for us. He writes, “We human beings are created to give glory to God and to reflect his love. Our participation in God’s plan to conquer evil totally and permanently fits into these purposes.”

We encourage you to read this book and expand your thinking into new dimensions.

—Reviewed by Roland Earnst

Improbable Planet

by Hugh Ross, Baker Books, © 2017,
288 pages, \$16.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0801075438



This is another outstanding book by Hugh Ross. The subtitle of the book is “How Earth Became Humanity’s Home.” Ross examines the processes God used to prepare this planet for human life. Although the book is somewhat technical, it is very readable since Ross explains things in a very understandable way.

The book deals with perplexing questions such as, “Why are there so many species on Earth?” and “Why such a huge universe?” Ross also explains why we are in this location in a spiral galaxy and why that galaxy is in the right location in the universe. Everything presented is thoroughly documented with many footnotes for those who want to study further into any of the topics.

The extreme fine-tuning of the entire cosmos right down to our planet is explained in a way that leaves the reader in awe. Not only are we in the right location in the cosmos for advanced life to exist and thrive, but we are also in the “best imaginable site for a view of the wonders of the universe.” As physicist Freeman Dyson wrote, “The more I examine the universe and study the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming.”

Speaking of architecture, this book takes the approach of constructing a building. When we set out to build a home, there are things we must keep in mind. We need the right construction materials and the right neighborhood. Then we must make preparations and construct the proper foundation. Along with the main construction, we must plan for heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning. Then we add the finishing touches to make it ready for occupancy. That is the approach Hugh Ross takes to explain the steps God took to prepare this planet we call home. That approach makes this technical book easy to comprehend.

We highly recommend this book for anyone interested in scientific apologetics.
—Reviewed by Roland Earnst

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DANDY DESIGNS

GOLD!



Have you ever wondered why gold is so precious? What is it about this metal that we can use it for so many things including the base of many national economic systems?

We think of gold as being rare, but it is quite abundant in the universe. Ten-billion tons of gold exist in Earth's oceans. Scientists believe

that near-Earth asteroid 433 Eros has more gold in it than has ever been mined on Earth. Gold is virtually indestructible. It is almost always recycled, and 85% of the gold ever found is still being used today.

The atomic structure of gold gives it an incredible range of applications. Because of its electron configuration, gold is not very active chemically. Gold is popular in jewelry not only because of its beauty but also because it is chemically inert and therefore does not tarnish. That same electron configuration makes it extremely malleable (able to be pounded into a sheet) and extremely ductile (able to be drawn out into a wire). A one-ounce piece of gold can be beaten into a sheet five-millionths of an inch thick or drawn out into a wire 50 miles long and 5 micrometers thick—one-tenth the diameter of a human hair. Gold wires are also very useful in electronics because gold is an excellent conductor of electricity. In computers and other electronics, gold plating of connectors gives low resistance electrical contacts that do not corrode.

For 70 years the standard treatment for rheumatoid arthritis has been injections of a liquid suspension of gold salts which act as an anti-inflammatory, but scientists still do not know why that works. As chemists look at the electron structure of gold, they find that its design makes it useful for many things. The design of the atom gives us some incredible materials that are of great value and gold is one of the most valuable. That is why gold is so precious. God has designed some amazing things for us, and gold is one that is high on the list.

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Dynamite Tree!



Plants use a wide range of methods to spread their seeds. Some plants have seeds encased in a shell or a fleshy bundle that various animals, including humans, like to eat. We are all familiar with nuts and fruits, but the basic design of these foods is to spread their seeds. We live in an area where poison ivy is a real nuisance, and getting rid of

it this year will not stop it from being a problem next year because birds eat the berries and replant the ivy all over our property. For good or bad, plants spread their seeds.

Plants that shoot their seeds use one of the most interesting methods of seed dispersal. The seed pod in the picture is from the sandbox tree (*Hura crepitans*) nicknamed “the dynamite tree” because of the explosive way the pods burst open. In the segments of the pod, the outer and inner layers grow at different speeds. This creates tension as the surfaces push against each other. When the seeds are ready, the pressure becomes so great, that the capsule explodes. The sections that were initially convex rapidly flip to concave in a process known to engineers as snap-buckling. That explosion can shoot the seeds 100 feet (30 meters) at speeds of 160 miles (257 kilometers) per hour.

Some of us remember “jumping disks” we had as children. Two metals were fused together with the metals having different coefficients of linear expansion. If you rubbed the side of the disk with your finger making it warm, it would expand, and you could bend it, so the disk had tension produced and held by the expanded metal. As the disk cooled, it would eventually snap back to its original shape, causing it to jump into the air.

Measurements of snapping plants show a g-force of 2400. Fighter pilots can handle about nine gs before passing out. A wide variety of designs allow plants to shoot seeds or snap shut to trap food.

Plants spread their seeds by many amazing mechanisms God has built into them, and which scientists are still trying to understand.

News and Notes

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON NEWS AND NOTES. The stories in News and Notes are condensed from articles previously published on our website www.DoesGodExist.today. You can use the QR codes with each of these articles to see the original posts for more details. There are also many other interesting and informative articles on that website each day. We encourage you to follow us daily on “Does God Exist? Today.” On that website you can also subscribe to our free weekly e-mail update. We call it “The Best of the Week from DOES GOD EXIST?” It contains links to the most popular of our posts on DGE? Today and our Facebook page ([Facebook.com/evidence4god](https://www.facebook.com/evidence4god)).



CLAYTON MUSEUM ADDS CHILDREN’S SECTION. Foster Stanback is a collector of artifacts of historical significance. In 2015 he established a museum in York, Nebraska, to house many of those artifacts. Because of our long association with Foster, he honored our work together by naming it the Clayton Museum of Ancient History.

The Clayton Museum houses an amazing collection of items from the time of Christ and earlier focusing on ancient Mesopotamia and the Roman Empire. The oldest artifacts go back approximately 5,000 years. The displays help us to understand the conditions and way of life that existed in biblical times and during the time of Christ.

The museum has had over 10,000 visitors, including many school groups. They have added a section devoted to children, with interactive displays and a variety of kid-friendly exhibits. It is located on the York College campus in York, Nebraska. Parking and admission are free. You can call for information or to schedule a tour (402) 363-5748 or <https://www.claytonmuseumofancienthistory.org/>.



STAR-SPANGLED BANNER VERSE 4. Most people are not aware that the “Star-Spangled Banner,” the national anthem of the United States, has four verses. One has to wonder what would happen at a sporting event if someone sang all four verses, especially verse four which goes like this:



O thus be it ever, when freemen
shall stand
Between their loved homes and the
war's desolation.
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may
the Heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and
preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our
cause it is just,

And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.'
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE LAWSUIT. Homeopathy is a medical system based on the belief that a substance that causes disease in a healthy person can cure a sick person if it is diluted enough.

Some religious groups embrace homeopathy or the related naturopathy believing that God created all life with the ability to heal itself. They frequently quote Genesis 9:1–3 as the starting point for the need for plants and minerals to sustain human health, because the meat now included in human diets would not fill the medical requirements. They also quote Acts 10:9–16 as part of the change that took place in the human diet that made it necessary for plants and minerals to provide supplements.

There is no doubt that nutrition is a part of good health, and supplements can be useful in maintaining health. But whether a plant or mineral could replace the effectiveness of penicillin or modern antibiotics is debatable. Some today are making claims about homeopathic medicine for curing disease with no scientific support.

CVS is the largest pharmacy chain in the United States, and they promote homeopathy by placing homeopathic remedies on their shelves alongside scientifically-proven medications. The Center for Inquiry (CFI) on June 29, 2018, filed a lawsuit against CVS. They told the Superior Court of the District of Columbia that homeopathy is a pseudoscience and that CVS is in violation of the Consumer Protection Procedures Act by deceiving their customers about the effectiveness of homeopathic products.



Greed and a lack of integrity among promoters of homeopathic cures have caused a lot of pain and a few deaths among religious people who think homeopathy is a biblical injunction. Read all labels carefully and pay attention to data offered by medical organizations before trusting any drug or supposed medication.

COLORADO CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION TARGETED JACK PHILLIPS AGAIN! The state of Colorado refuses to stop harassing Jack Phillips for his Christian faith. A few months ago we reported on how the Colorado Civil Rights Commission is targeting Jack Phillips. Mr. Phillips owns a business called Masterpiece Cakeshop. Jack is an artist, and he expresses his art in finely-crafted cakes for special occasions. Jack and his wife are also deeply committed Christians, and the “Master” in the cake shop’s name reflects his Master, Jesus Christ. He wants every piece of art he designs to reflect his faith as he serves others.

When a same-sex couple asked him to create a cake for their wedding, he respectfully declined. Doing so would violate his deeply-held religious conviction that marriage is between a man and a woman. He would create a cake for those customers for another occasion, but not for their wedding. The Colorado Civil Rights Commission punished him severely and accused him of acting like the Nazi’s or the segregationists of the past.

After years of litigation, in June 2018 the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of Jack Phillips by a vote of 7 to 2. Phillips was freed from years of legal troubles. But not for long. On the day the Supreme Court took up his case in June of 2017, an attorney called the Masterpiece Cakeshop. He requested Jack to create a cake for him that was blue on the outside and pink on the inside to celebrate his gender transition from male to female. Jack’s Christian faith told him that he could not do that, and he politely declined. The lawyer filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission.

The commission did not act on that complaint until after they had lost the first case before the Supreme Court, but now they are targeting Jack Phillips again. Obviously, the lawyer who requested the blue and pink cake was setting him up. It is just as apparent that the state of Colorado is out to destroy Jack’s business and attack his faith. The Alliance Defending Freedom filed a lawsuit against the state officials and filed a preliminary injunction with a federal court to stop the harassment by the state.



OPIOID CRISIS AND FAITH. Between 2001 and 2016 there was a 345% increase in opioid-related deaths in the United States. In New Hampshire, opioid deaths exceeded highway deaths. We cannot overstate the magnitude of the opioid crisis in the United States. Why is this happening, and what can we do about it?

Doctors prescribe the drugs for many people due to pain from an accident or surgery. Some never manage to get off the drugs, adding more and more to achieve a level of comfort they feel necessary. Many

get opioids by raiding someone's medicine cabinet or buying them on the street or from a friend or associate who is selling the drugs.

Having a strong faith in God is not a guarantee that a person will not have an opioid addiction problem. However, churches do have a unique opportunity to provide education about opioid addiction to a broad cross-section of society. People with strong religious faith also can be agents to help others get out of addiction.

Christians Against Substance Abuse (CASA) offers courses and a nationwide list of halfway houses. They also provide a directory of Faith-Based Substance Abuse Recovery and Support Groups in the United States. They have an extensive prison ministry that we work with in our own apologetics prison courses. You can see more on their website at kingscrossingprisonministries.org.



HARVESTING ORGANS FROM PRISONERS. Jesus dealt with the poor, the down-trodden, and those that society might deem as “unfit.” One fundamental belief of Christianity is that every individual is of value, no matter what the circumstance. That includes prisoners.

Communist China has always been an opponent of Christian values and teaching. It has now been revealed that Chinese doctors have forcibly removed the organs of prisoners for transplanting into visitors who come to China for organ transplants.

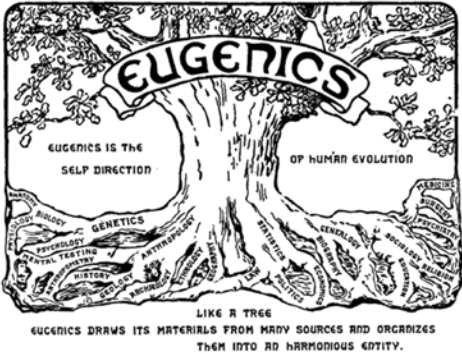


If you view humans as just animals no different from any other, and you consider some humans to be unproductive in society, why not use them as you would pigs to get organs that can enable the “fit” to live longer? Christian values are critical in medical ethics. China is an excellent example of what happens when these values are not used, and atheist values are applied. The result is such detestable practices as harvesting organs from prisoners for financial gain.



CRISPR AND THE GHOST OF EUGENICS. In 1927 Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes stated: “Three generations of imbeciles is enough.” He was explaining the court’s support of a Virginia program of involuntary sterilization in a case identified as *Buck vs. Bell*. The Virginia law and others like it in other states compelled the involuntary sterilization of those people deemed genetically inferior. More than 60,000 people in the United States were sterilized in compliance with the laws the Supreme Court upheld. It was connected to the eugenics movement.

The concept of eugenics goes back at least to the ancient Greeks, but it became a popular movement in Europe and North America in the early twentieth century. Adolf Hitler used the concept of eugenics to justify his promotion of one superior racial group and to eliminate the inferior groups.



Logo of Second International Congress on Eugenics in 1921

Today the concept of using science to produce superior human beings is even more realistic because of a gene-editing tool called CRISPR. Dr. Henry Greely of Stanford University says that CRISPR “might one day be used to engineer humans who are more intelligent, beautiful, or athletic.”

The potential for good with CRISPR is enormous. It may be possible to cure

genetic diseases or to produce useful new food sources. The problem is that gene editing can also be used for evil purposes.

So what will CRISPR be used for — enormous good, or enormous evil? It is essential that brilliant young Christians become involved in science. They must be involved not only in the research but also in how to use the products of the research.



CLEVER PLANETS. We have often mentioned many of the conditions that must exist to make a planet habitable. The number is large and growing as science learns more about Earth’s special life-supporting features. Now NASA has awarded \$7,700,000 to Rice University to conduct a five-year study to see what it takes to create a “recipe for a habitable planet.” The project has been named CLEVER Planets, an acronym for **C**ycles of **L**ife-**E**ssential **V**olatile **E**lements in **R**ocky **P**lanets.

The research team will include experts in astrophysics, atmosphere and climate science, geology, geochemistry, geophysics, and organic chemistry from NASA and major universities. This will be the most in-depth study of what it takes to create a habitable planet.

The lead investigator of CLEVER Planets, Rajdeep Dasgupta of Rice, wrote: “A recipe for life as we know it requires essential elements like carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur.” Of course, that is not all that is required to create a recipe for a life-supporting planet. You also need liquid water, the right temperature with stable conditions, a proper atmosphere, and shielding

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eugenics_congress_logo.png

from dangerous radiation. Having an atmosphere requires a planet of the right size to have the right amount of gravity to sustain an atmosphere. To have liquid water and the right temperature requires that the planet must be the right distance from the right kind and size of star. The planet needs a magnetic field to shield from dangerous particles coming from the star. To have a magnetic field, magnetic elements must exist inside the planet. The list goes on and on.

We look forward to seeing the results of the CLEVER Planets study five years from now. The bottom line is that it is very, very difficult to get all of the right ingredients required to create the recipe for a habitable planet. Earth is an exceptional place in the universe. But as we have said before, if there is any form of life anywhere else in the universe, that has nothing to do with the existence of God. We believe in a God who can do anything he chooses to do in keeping with his nature.



SCIENCE CREDIBILITY AND MEDIA REPORTING.

Can you trust scientific reports? *The Week* for September 14, 2018, featured an article about a two-year study of scientific experiments reported between 2010 and 2015. The purpose was to examine science credibility by seeing if the studies contained bias by the researchers. In other words, were the researchers trying to prove their theories by finding false positives.

The people conducting the study examined 21 high-profile experiments and found further research confirmed only 13 of the 21. The problem here is not science, but the way funding is done and how the media treats research reports. To get funding, you have to get results. The media reports flashy results which people use to back up what they want to believe. A headline describing the results of a research study may appear in the media and get worldwide distribution. When later scientific investigations find the result was incorrect, the media rarely reports that the first study was bogus.

An interesting example of this was a report on the beneficial results of drinking alcohol. Several studies suggested beneficial effects from drinking small amounts of alcohol, but follow-up studies showed that as little as one drink a day increases the incidence of health problems.

The same page in *The Week* that reported on science credibility issues contained the information on alcohol dangers along with follow-up data on the damaging effects of marijuana. We need to be careful not to take a sensational headline in a major newspaper as proof of anything until later studies have verified it.



This journal is a part of a program of service titled Does God Exist? The purpose of the program is to provide thinking, seeking people with scientific evidence that God does exist and that the Bible is his Word. It is our conviction that all men can logically and rationally believe in God. In addition to this bimonthly journal, the Does God Exist? program offers DVDs, CDs, courses, books, and other materials. These materials are offered on a loan basis or at our cost. We also are more than willing to correspond with you and answer any specific question(s) you might have. If you would like further information on borrowing or purchasing these materials, we would be glad to send it to you. Check the boxes below to describe what you would like and mail it to us. We will get it right out to you.

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