

## SERMON NOTES

**Dr. David A. Renwick -- September 2, 2012**

Probing Questions II: God – Are the Atheists Right?

**A. The Bible assumes God's existence:** never tries to prove it!  
see Gen. 1:1 –“In the Beginning God”; Ps.19:1, Rom.1:19-21

### **B. The Evidence**

#### **1. i. Against God: The terrible witness of Believers**

- a. e.g., religious wars, strife, hypocrisy, scandal
- b. We have not followed Jesus's words  
*“By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another”(John 13:35)*
- c. Being lukewarm/tepid, no commitment (see Rev. 3:16)  
Or Fanatical (judgmental, harsh, no love or joy)

#### **1. ii. For God: The Terrible Witness of Unbelievers/Atheists**

- a. Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Mao, PolPot, racism, tribalism
- b. More destructive in 20<sup>th</sup> century than all religions ever.

#### **2. i. Against God: The Problem of Evil, Suffering, Injustice**

- a. Not a problem for ‘every kind of god,’ e.g., if your ‘god’ is weak, evil, or just grumpy!
- b. A problem for the Christian God because our ‘God’ is powerful but also loving and just.
- c. One Possible Solution: Evil exists because God chooses to create us as moral beings. For moral choice to be important, choices must be between good/God and something/someone else: that something else is, by definition, ‘evil.’

#### **2. ii. For God: The Problem of Goodness, Art, and Beauty**

- a. The atheist must ask an equally difficult question:  
*How come there is so much goodness in the world if there is no God, or if ‘survival of the fittest’ (dog-eat-dog) is the primary law of the universe?*

### **C. The Impossibility of Proving the Case – Either Way**

- i. Belief always trumps Reason for both the believer and the atheist. An atheist is as much a believer as a ‘believer.’
- ii. There are no proofs, only clues (Tim Keller); or rumors (Peter Berger)

### **D. Two Clues for God**

#### i. Science

- a. The Bible does not tell us *how* the world was created, but *that* God was in it – from beginning to end.
- b. THE big question is not just “Is there a God?” but “Why is there something rather than nothing?”
- c. The statistical probability that human life would ever exist is tiny (see interview of Francis Collins [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com), Aug.7, 2006; *The Language of God*, Francis Collins, 2006)

#### ii. The Need for Meaning

- a. Somerset Maugham (in The Summing Up):  
*‘If one puts aside the existence of God . . . the answer is so unpalatable that most will not face it: life has no meaning.’*
- b. John Paul Sartre (in Nausea): . . .  
*‘here we are eating and drinking . . . and there’s nothing, nothing, absolutely no reason for existing.’*

#### iii. Meaning is almost always related to relationships

##### **This is THE CLUE:**

Ultimate meaning comes from a relation with the ultimate personal being . . . **God** . . .

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### **Impacting the series and this sermon**

- 1. The Reason for God, Timothy Keller, 2008
- 2. God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens, 2007
- 3. “How I found God and peace with my atheist brother” (Peter Hitchens’ return to Christianity) December 16, 2011. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1255983>
- 4. The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins, 2006
- 5. Why There Almost Certainly is a God: Doubting Dawkins, Keith Ward, 2008 (The book is detailed philosophy; the video is easier: see <http://vimeo.com/10259981#>)
- 6. A Rumor of Angels Peter Berger, 1969.
- 7. Death in the City, Francis Schaeffer, 1969.
- 8. I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist, Norman Geisler, Frank Turek, 2004