

If I Cannot See God, How Can I Know He Exists?

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Some people doubt that God exists, since they cannot see Him. If God is invisible, it would seem there is no firm basis for believing He exists. But on closer inspection, this line of thinking is mistaken—not just about God, but also about knowledge in general and even about scientific knowledge in particular.

Let's start with science. Yes, science is based on observation. But no, not everything a scientist accepts as real can be observed. For example, no one has ever seen an electron. Or gravity. Scientists conclude that electrons and gravity are real because they see effects that are best explained by a theory of electrons or a theory of gravity.

Next, let's consider knowledge in general. People often reach conclusions that go beyond what they see or hear with their own eyes and ears. We trust our friends when they tell us what they saw or heard, even if we were not present to experience it. That's also how we study history: we look at records left behind by people who were there at the time, who personally observed important events. Based on their testimony, we can know the truth.

Now let's return to belief in God. We can know that God exists in several ways.

One way is similar to how science works. The theory of gravity is the best explanation for why the planets move as they do, and why apples fall from trees, and so on. Similarly, the existence of God is the best explanation for quite a number of things. Take, for example, the cause-and-effect relationships that scientists study. If every effect has a cause, then even that cause must also be an effect resulting from a prior cause. The cause-effect chain can be traced backward in time until—until what? Surely there must have been a First Cause that started the process. The First Cause is God.

Marveling at the design in nature is another example. Where did the design of the human eye come from, unless there is a divine Designer?

Another way to reach the conclusion that God exists is through the study of history. It turns out that God has not always been invisible. At an event known as the transfiguration, the apostles Peter,

James, and John **saw** the man Jesus of Nazareth revealed in glory as the Son of God, and they **heard** the voice of God the Father affirming who Jesus really is. (Matthew 17:1–9) As Peter later wrote, “We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were **eyewitnesses** of His majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)

John similarly emphasized his direct contact with God who had come in the flesh—Jesus. “That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our **eyes**, which we have **looked** upon, and our **hands** have **handled**, concerning the Word of life....” (1 John 1:1) Luke the evangelist also referred to “**eyewitnesses**.” On the basis of their reports, Luke became the first historian of Christianity, writing “an orderly account ... that you may know the **certainty** of those things in which you were instructed.” (Luke 1:1–4)

There's more evidence, too. Over 500 eyewitnesses saw Jesus alive after He had died on the cross. (1 Corinthians 15:6) They saw a dead man who had come back to life—and based on everything they saw and heard, that man was no ordinary man. He was God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, the one whom the Old Testament prophets had promised would come in order to save people from sin and death by giving His life in their place.

Does God exist? Yes, but there's more! Through the word of the apostles' testimony (the New Testament), the Holy Spirit also grants faith in order that we may go beyond mere knowledge of God's existence and have a firm trust in Jesus as our Savior.

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