

Why Would Anyone Want to Believe in God?

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God is more controversial than anyone or anything else.

Does God exist? Or are there no gods? Or many gods? Should we trust the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, or our own feelings? No matter how a person answers, everyone has one thing in common: we all have an opinion about God.

Opinions, however, can only go so far. What people really desire is the truth—the truth about themselves and also the truth about God.

What Are the Characteristics of God?

Despite disagreements about religion, the simple fact is that nearly everyone knows the basic idea of what it means to be “God.”

God is **eternal**. He was not created. He has always existed, and always will.

God is **almighty**. He is not weaker than others, but stronger than everyone and everything.

God **made everything**. Only God is eternal. Only God is almighty. So, God must be the creator of everything. Of course, that would mean that God created us, too.

God is a **moral judge**. Some attitudes and behaviors are good. Others are wicked. God judges people on the basis of the distinction between good and evil.

That last part is frightening, isn't it? Who among us can claim to be always good and never wicked? Who among us can tell God, “I've been so good all of the time that there's nothing you can hold against me”? On the contrary, we cannot stop ourselves from knowing that we have done bad things and that God has good reason to judge us.

As we reflect on our memories of lying, cheating, and stealing—of gossiping, lusting, and telling rude jokes—of hurting others and even hurting ourselves—suddenly the thought occurs to us: we don't really like the idea that God exists, since we recognize that we justly deserve His wrath.

Plain as day, the most obvious characteristic of God is that He condemns us exactly because we deserve it. Not a pleasant thought at all!

Indeed, the reason there are so many religions in the world is that people invent ways to escape the terrifying realization that God's justice means our

punishment. Atheists dodge the issue by claiming God does not exist. Other religions lower God's moral standards so that people can pretend they are good enough to earn God's favor. But the truth is hard to shake: “all have sinned ... the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 3:23, 6:23)

Why Would a Sinner Want to Believe?

By nature, we do not want to believe in God—not fully, not the true God as revealed in the Bible.

There is only one good reason that anyone would ever want to believe in the true God. That reason is called “the Gospel.”

“Gospel” means good news, and the Bible's good news is that the true God is more than eternal, more than almighty, more than our creator, and more than our moral judge.

The true God also **loves** us and **forgives** us.

The true God's love for us resulted in the most amazing event in all of history: God bridged the gap between Himself and us by becoming fully human in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus led a perfect life, fulfilling God's moral law. Jesus suffered innocently, taking the punishment that was due us. After dying on the cross, Jesus rose back to life. His resurrection—the turning point of history—is God's guarantee that our sins are forgiven, our standing before God has been restored, and heaven awaits us when we die.

We do not know these things on our own. We would not even want to believe in God, since our sin makes us run from God in fear of wrath.

The Holy Spirit turns our hearts when we hear the good news about what Jesus has done for us. Faith fills the void that unbelief had carved out. We rejoice to discover in the Bible that God's mercy exceeds His justice, and that He fully and freely forgives us.

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