



UNIT 1: DOES GOD EXIST?



SESSION 1

Cosmological Evidence



Cosmological arguments start with the existence of the universe itself and then argue for the existence of God as the explanation for that universe.

Premise 1: The Universe Exists

“I am thinking, therefore I am.” | | Rene Descartes

Premise 2: The Universe Began to Exist

Scientifically, we know that the universe is expanding.

The first law of thermodynamics states that the amount of energy in the universe is constant.

The second law says that despite the fact that the amount is the same, the amount that's usable is constantly decreasing.

Premise 3: The Beginning Was Caused

Premise 4: The Cause of the Universe Is Personal



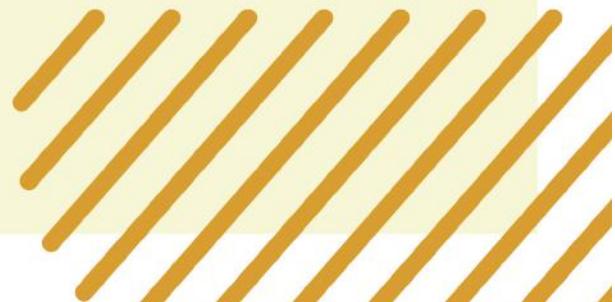
Physical Causes

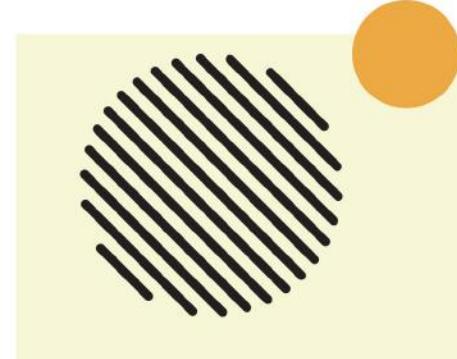
For physical causes to work, physical stuff needs to exist.

“Actual infinity” doesn’t work in the physical world - it’s logically absurd.

Personal Causes

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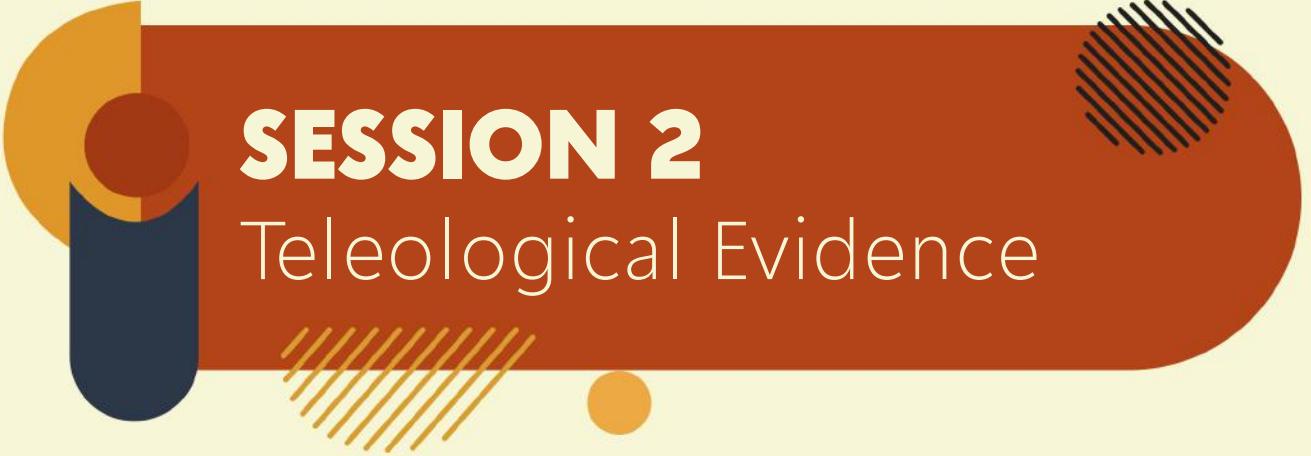
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you are a Christian, what convinced you to believe in God?

How convincing do you find the cosmological argument?

What problems, if any, do you have with it?

With another person, try putting this argument into your own words.



SESSION 2

Teleological Evidence

Teleological evidence focuses on a particular phenomenon, detail, or design.

The word “telos” means purpose or end.

Does the universe show evidence of design? Yes.

Examples of design:

the gravitational pull of the moon and earth and the impact on ocean tides

the complexity of the skeletal and nervous systems

the earth’s distance from the sun that makes it habitable for living things

the centrifugal force that keeps atoms held together

If the universe was designed, then there must be a designer.



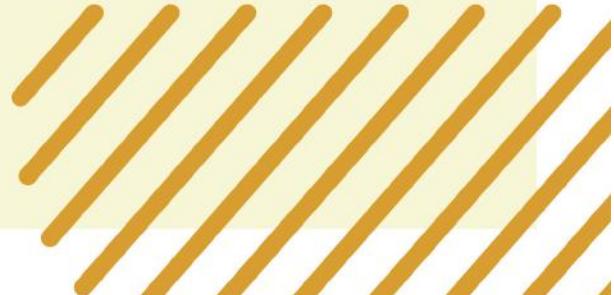
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

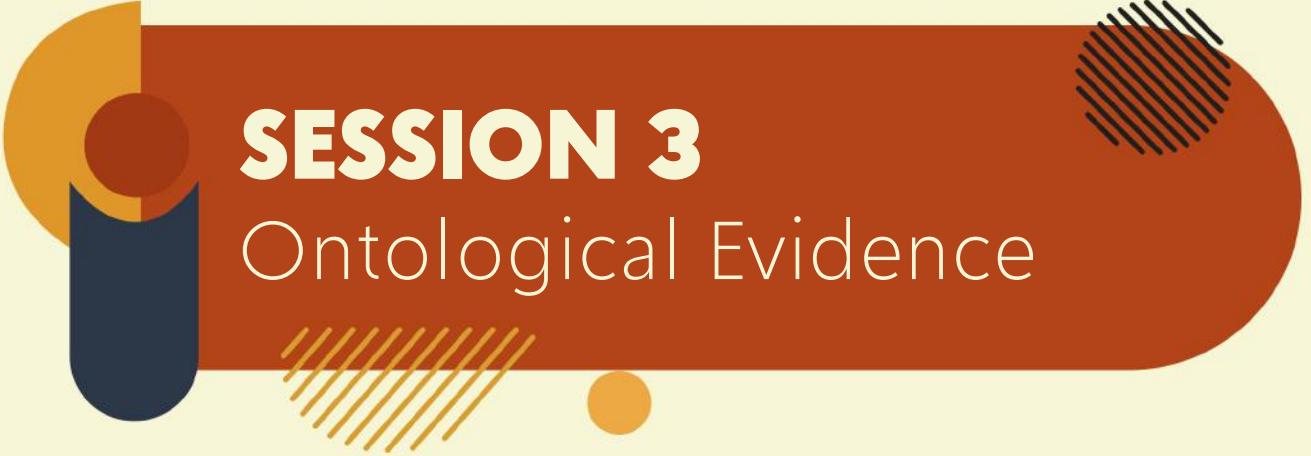
How convincing do you find this argument?

What problems, if any, do you have with it?

Where do you see evidence of design? What does the design suggest about the Designer?

With another person, try putting this argument into your own words.





SESSION 3

Ontological Evidence

Ontology is the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.

Premise 1: God Possibly Exists.

Premise 2: God Necessarily Exists.

Modality in this context refers to concepts of necessity, possibility, and impossibility in reference to existence or the nature of one's being.

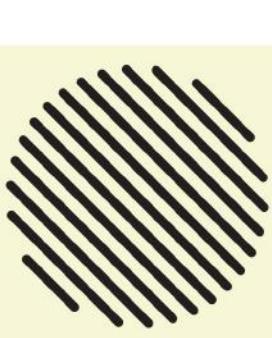
Three different modes:

necessity

possibility

impossibility

The mode of necessity refers to a thing or truth that has to be.



Various possibilities are considered by philosophers to represent different possible worlds - different courses history might have taken.

A necessary thing or a necessary truth would be the kind of thing that shows up in every single possible world.

Our existence is a possibility.

In other words, there are “worlds” in which we were never born if, for instance, our parents had never gotten together.

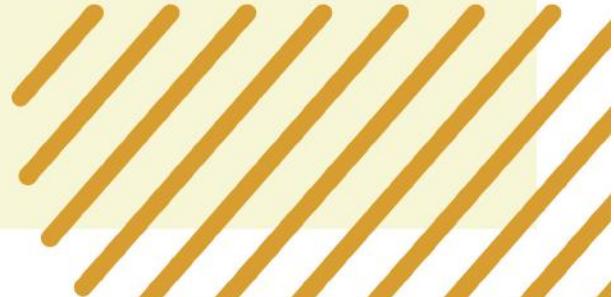
The mode of impossibility refers to a thing that cannot exist.

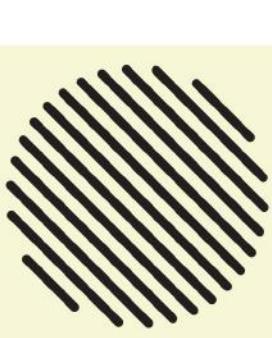
a stick with one end

a square circle

a married bachelor

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Premise 1: God is defined as a maximally great or perfect being.

Premise 2: The existence of a perfect being is impossible or necessary (since it can't be possible).

The greatest conceivable being (or God) cannot be contingent (or possible).

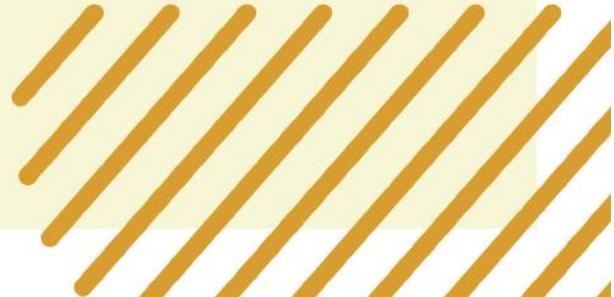
So, God is either necessary or He's impossible.

Premise 3: The concept of a perfect being is not impossible, since it is neither non-sensical nor self-contradictory.

Conclusion 1: Therefore, (a) a perfect being must be necessary.

Conclusion 2: Therefore, (b) a perfect being must exist.

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Premise 1: It's possible that a maximally great God exists.

Premise 2: If it is possible that a maximally great God exists, then the maximally great being exists in some possible world.

Premise 3: If a maximally great being exists in some possible worlds, then it has to exist in every possible world.

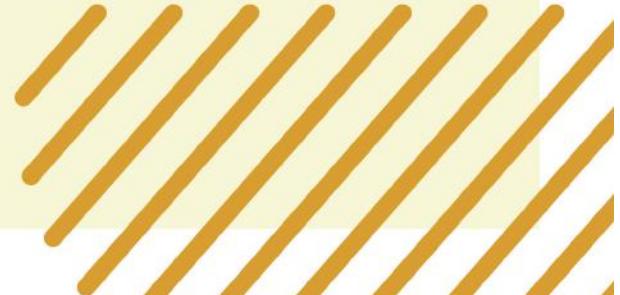
Premise 4: If a maximally great being exists in every possible world, then it exists in the actual world.

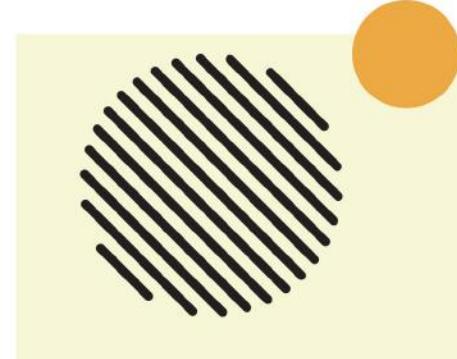
Conclusion: If a maximally great being exists in the actual world, then a maximally great being exists.

Premise 1: God possibly exists.

Premise 2: God necessarily exists.

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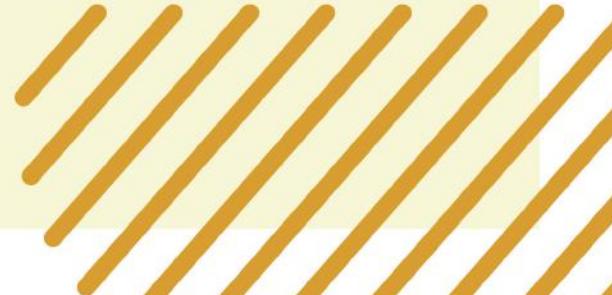
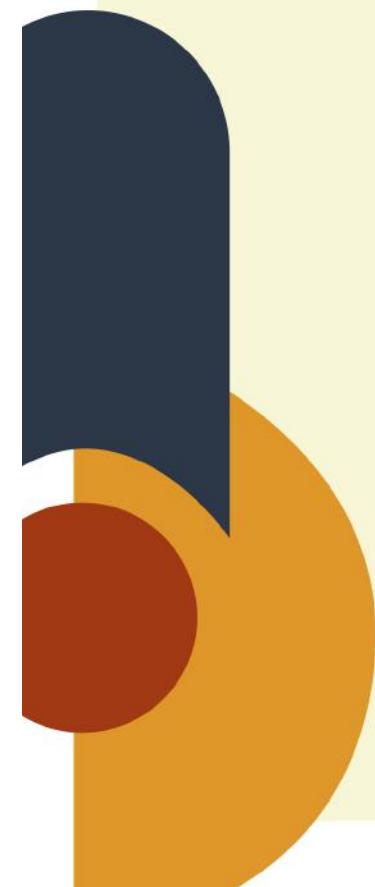
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How convincing do you find this argument?

What problems do you have with it?

Zach mentioned that God must “exist in every world” for Him to be a Supreme and necessary being. How is God’s presence evident in your life?

With another person, try putting this argument into your own words.





SESSION 4

Morality, Experience, and Meaning



Moral arguments all start with this innate sense of “how we ought to live.”

There are nuances and differences, but there’s also remarkable consistency among various cultures throughout human history.

Murder, lying, and stealing are generally looked down upon.

Loyalty, love, generosity, patience, and kindness are generally celebrated.

Though we may differ to an extent on what moral norms should be, we all generally agree that there should be moral norms.

So, where does our sense of right and wrong come from?

[People] “who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need any forgiveness... It is after you have realized that there is a Moral Law and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power – it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk.” || C.S. Lewis



Spiritual experience arguments refer, primarily, to two things: longing and transformation.

Longing

C.S. Lewis referred to longing deep within us as a "nostalgia which faces towards the future."

Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century French prodigy in mathematics, physics, and philosophy, noted that there seems to be a "God-shaped vacuum" in the heart that can only be filled by God.

Why is it that we wonder?

Why is it that we hope?

Why is it that we long?

Why is it that we desire?

Lewis observed that for every need (or desire) there seems to be a solution to satisfy it.

If we're hungry, there's food.

If we're thirsty, there's water.

If we're tired, we can sleep.

If we want to fall in love, we can fall in love.

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

|| C.S. Lewis





Transformation

If you truly experience God, then God truly exists.

To deny God's existence is to deny the experience and testimony of billions of people.

The principle of credulity argues that you should believe what you experience unless you have a reason not to.

The principle of testimony argues that you should believe what others tell you they have experienced, unless you have a reason not to.

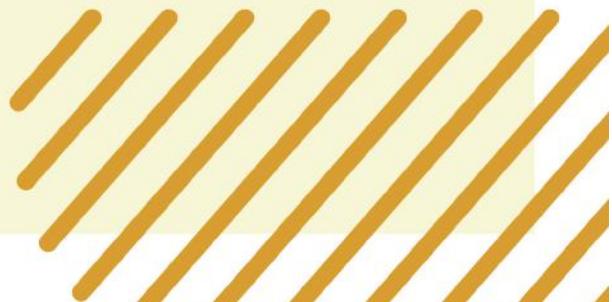
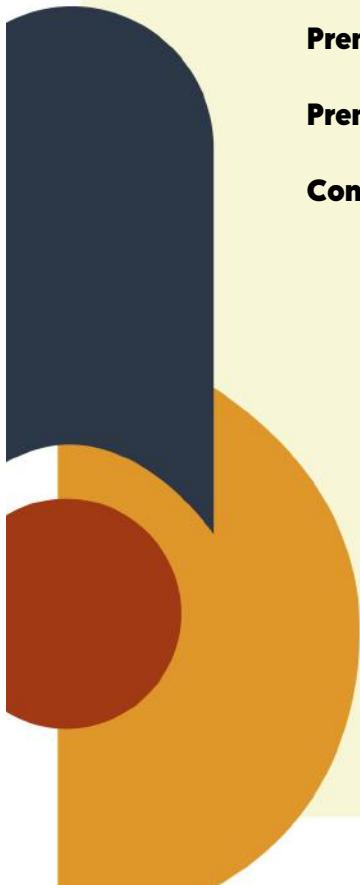
Meaning arguments refer to the presence of information and meaning in the universe.

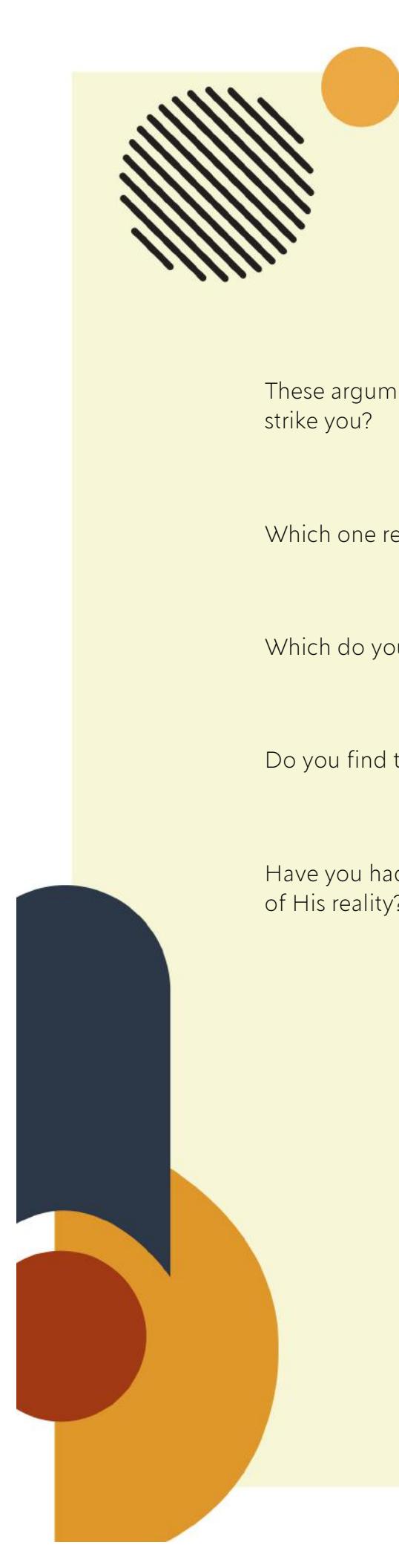
Premise 1: If there is information and meaning in the universe, then there is a God.

Premise 2: The universe is filled with information and meaning.

Conclusion: Therefore, there is a God.

This is known as a modus ponens argument (if P, then Q).





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

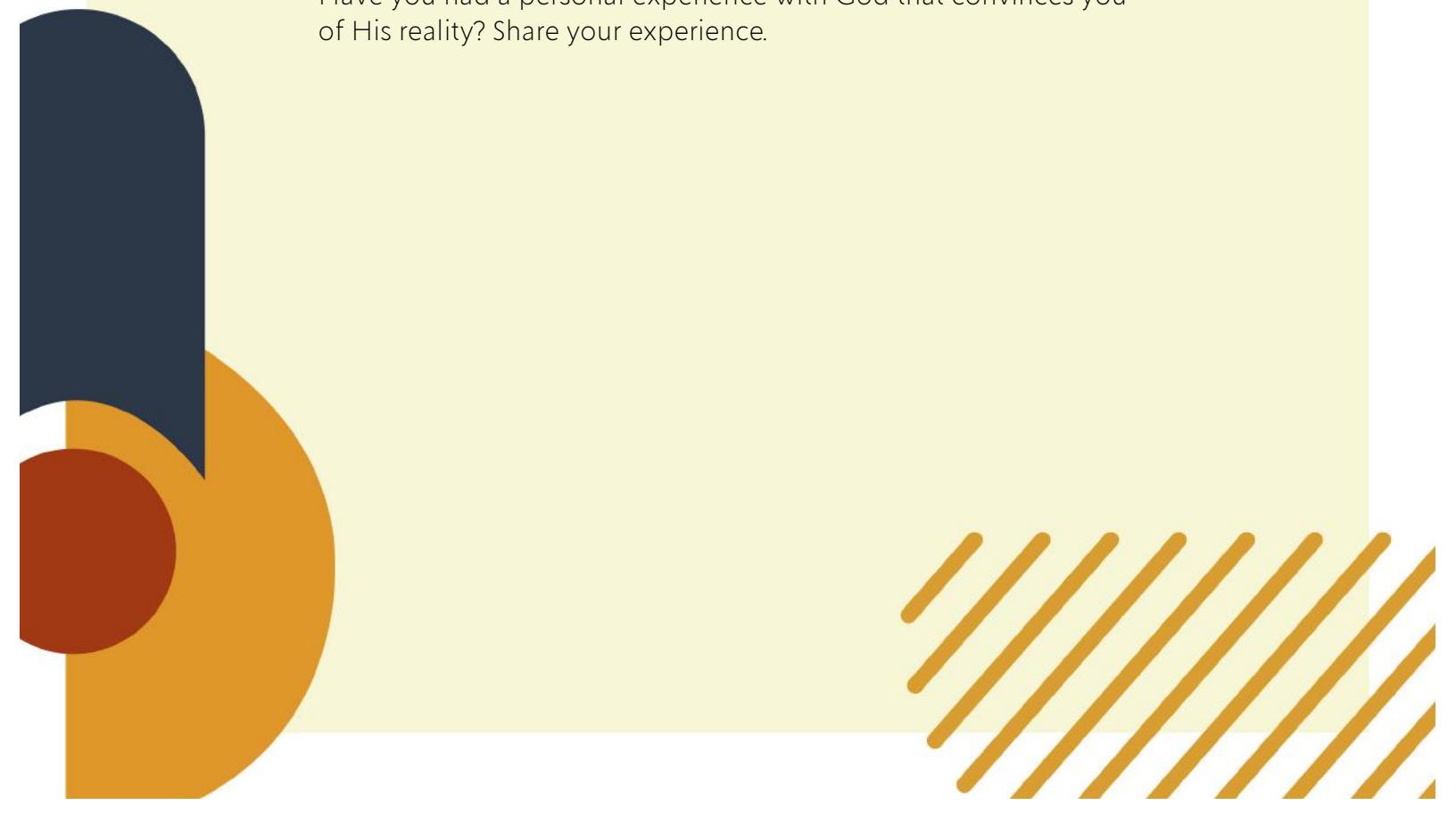
These arguments are a bit different than the others. How does that strike you?

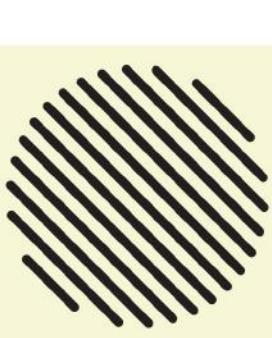
Which one resonates most?

Which do you have the most questions about?

Do you find these more or less convincing than the previous arguments?

Have you had a personal experience with God that convinces you of His reality? Share your experience.





The universe is filled with information.

But if the series of information that guides and directs the universe is a result of chance, then it's mindless, and therefore meaningless.

The presence of information can only have meaning if there's a personal being behind it.

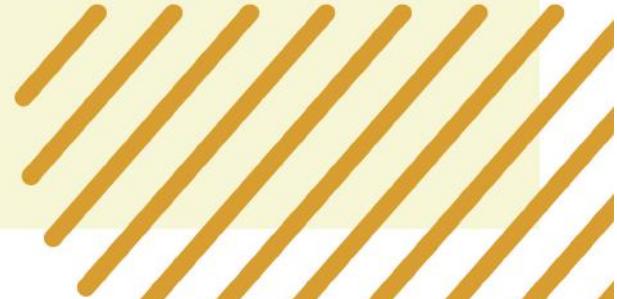
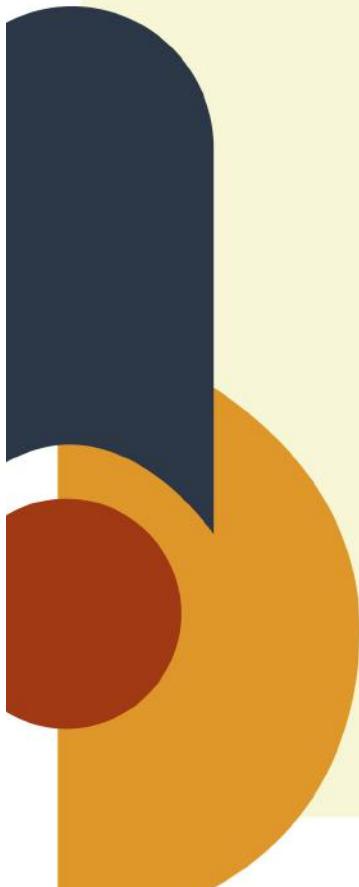
Thus, if there's meaning in the universe, then there's going to be a personal being (or God) behind it.

Conclusion

Apologetics is like outfitting a tool belt with all sorts of different tools of evidence.

Every project requires a different tool, and every person requires a different approach or needs a certain intellectual angle satisfied in their thinking.

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Recommended Resources

Philosophy & the Christian Faith by Colin Brown

Reasonable Faith by William Lane Craig

Know Why You Believe by Paul Little

Christian Apologetics by Douglas Groothuis

The Question of God by Dr. Armand Nicholi, Jr.

The Reason for God by Timothy Keller

Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell

Five Views on Apologetics by Various Authors

