Why I Believe
Brian Knapp

So tell me about yourself. You aren't a Christian, correct? Do you believe any sort of god exists? It seems like you are saying it is at least *possible* that the Christian God exists, the one described in the Bible.

What does Romans 1 say about God and people's knowledge of him?

> 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Romans 1:18-22 (ESV)

"For although they *knew* God." This would mean - if it is true - that you already, in a sense, know that God exists. This part of vs. 21 is pretty important, too - "they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." This says that reasoning about God is a moral issue.

I think we both know there is a difference between proof and persuasion. Someone could offer you a proof that God exists, but that doesn't mean you will be persuaded. Yes, I know that anyone could make that claim. Muslims could say the same about Islam. They could say, "You don't believe it because you are a sinner," or, "my proof isn't sufficient because you fail to see the truth." But if Christianity is true, then this accurately describes you.

Do you agree that proof never operates in a vacuum? That it always operates based on assumptions? If you think about it, it has to - we are fallible creatures, we can't get "outside" ourselves (on our own) - anything originating within us (even proof) is going to be doomed to be subjectively based and therefore ultimately unknowable.

This means the question of God's exists – of anything at all - is ultimately an issue of authority.

Who does God swear by when making an oath?

> For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself. Hebrews 6:13 (ESV)

He swore by himself, because there is no greater authority. So what does that mean for us? It means if this is the case, we must, in the nature of the case, take God's word for it. Hypothetically, if God exists, the only way we can really know it is true is if we accept his say so.

From an argumentative standpoint, if you are looking for a reason - that is, some sort of "proof" - you absolutely *must* begin with God. We all necessarily start with some sort of faith, and so it is a question of *what* faith commitment to start with, not whether we *should* start with one.

I know the ultimate question you are going to ask ... "how do you know the Bible is true?" After all, since I appeal to the Bible to answer your questions, this is what it all comes down to.

There are two ways to answer you. One is to give the "mechanics" of it, and the other is to give a reason to believe it. The mechanics are described quite clearly in Romans 1 and all of God's revelation. "How" we know the Bible is true is by God revealing himself to us in such a way that our fallible, subjective self can't block him out.

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But you are likely looking for a reason, and so I offer you this: the "reason" we know he exists is that without him we cannot know anything. If God does not exist, then *in principle* we could never know what we do know *in practice*. That's the reason, and that reason is accepted totally on faith.

We must take God at his word - that is our "reason." But isn't that reasoning in a circle, you might ask? It is, but not an irrational circle due to the fact we are reasoning about ultimate faith commitments. You have the same circularity with your ultimate faith commitment, whatever it may be. If you don't think you do, you need to think about it a little more.

But you say you want this expressed as an argument. The closest you will ever come to an argument that God exists is to deny his existence and see what that leads to. It is indirect rather than direct. Let me say that again, and let it sink in. The argument is indirect, rather than direct. It must be indirect, because otherwise you are just begging the question in a viciously circular manner.

What do you lose if you deny God? You don't merely lose a foundation for morality, for science, for aesthetics, for logic, and for knowledge. If you deny God, then *in principle* you no longer have a basis for any of these things – for anything at all. You can't ultimately offer a reason for those things you say are true, or that you know, or that you even feel. Any reason you give relies on other reasons which ultimately rely upon your basic faith commitment. If that basic commitment isn't the God of the Bible then you are left floating in mid-air, offering up reasons which have no foundation beneath them.

This situation is what David is describing in Psalm 14:1 when he says - "the fool says in his heart "there is no God"." David isn't name-calling; he is describing the intellectual position of someone who is suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.

The matter of your belief in God is moral. It isn't merely an intellectual matter. You are asking for proof of God, right? Then we have to take into consideration what the Bible says about God, because if we don't, then we aren't talking about the God of the Bible. But if we are talking about the God of the Bible, the Bible says that your lack of belief is a moral issue, not an intellectual one.

You ask, "How about God? Prove to me that He is real!" Yet you already know he exists. The clearest way to demonstrate this to you is for you to realize the position you are arguing from. I am arguing as a Christian (Lord willing), as a Christian Theist. You are arguing from some other position than that. You have a different basic faith commitment than I do, and that, my friend, is where you need to turn your attention. Where does yours get you? If yours is true *in principle*, what does it get you, versus if mine is true in principle? That's where the debate actually is at. If your basic beliefs/assumptions/faith commitment is true - if those beliefs actually describe reality - then what would be the result?

This is what you will find (Lord willing) upon asking yourself that question - if there is nothing objective at the bottom of your worldview, then all bets are off. You can't know anything at all - you have no basis for belief about anything. Nothing *could* be, in the nature of the case, intelligible. That's the difference between my faith and your faith, not because I am smarter or better or more moral than you – it isn't anything about me at all, it is all about Him.