

How do we know there is a God?

Young Adults Study: Christian Doctrine

Discussion:

Where do you see proof of God's existence?

God's General Revelation.

God reveals himself through creation.

The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world. (Psalm 19:1–4a, NLT)

We can discern God's power and God's nature through observing what he has made.

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. (Romans 1:18–20, NLT)

God's has written his moral law on the hearts of people.

Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life. (Romans 2:14–16, NLT)

God gives all humans evidence of his existence and his goodness.

“Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.” (Acts 14:15–17, NLT)

The human instinct to worship is proof of God's existence.

So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about. (Acts 17:22–23, NLT)

"He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. (Acts 17:24–26, NLT)

"His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. (Acts 17:27–29, NLT)

By telling people about God, we are inviting them into believing what their hearts already know.

"God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30–31, NLT)

Calvin argued that even though we know about God through general revelation, we do not know all we can know about God. In other words there are things we cannot know about God.

What can we not know about God?

Sin mars the witness of God in general revelation.

The created order is now under a curse (Gen 3:17-19).

Creation is subjected to futility (Romans 8:20).

Creation awaits liberation (Romans 8:19).

People can reject the knowledge of God (Romans 1:21).

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. (Romans 1:21, NLT)

Satan can blind the minds of people (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4, NLT)

In order to know the truth about God, we need God's Specific Revelation.

God's Specific Revelation.

Discussion Question:

How does God speak to you?

How does God speak to people in general?

God speaks through events that happened in the past.

God speaks through divine word given by his Spirit to people.

Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20–21, NLT)

God speaks through the incarnation.

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names. (Hebrews 1:1–4, NLT)