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## Why I Believe

Have you ever thought about how many different ideas about faith, religion and God exist among the human race?

There are Christians in a variety of stripes. There are Hindus. There are Muslims—Shiites and Sunnis. There are Confucianists, Shintoists, Buddhists, Bahaists, atheists, agnostics, nihilists, humanists, deists, pantheists, and New Agers, and every one of them thinks he or she is right.

Guess what? They can't all be right. If they can't all be right, then it stands to reason a whole lot of people are wrong. So when people die, they are going to find out who's wrong and who's right. Of course if you are a Hindu and you are right you'll never know that you are right because your greatest aim is to cease to exist. Almost everybody thinks they're right so it's going to be a shocker for lots of people to discover they were wrong.

Now thoughtful people ask thoughtful questions like

**"What are the odds that I'm right?"**

**"So many people have so many different religious ideas and opinions. Why do I think I'm right?"**

**"There are so many religious options; how can you make the right decision?"**

Some folks have reached this conclusion: There are so many options and there are so many people who disagree with each other, and because there isn't sufficient evidence to give support to their views the only really, appropriate, response is "Don't decide. Don't commit. Just be an agnostic or a skeptic."

Well, let's think about that response in terms of the options we face. There are different kinds of options.

**Some options are "live options" and some are "dead options."**

How about the idea that our next President will be a Republican...is that a possibility? Yes, it's a possibility. The idea that our next President will be Democrat...is that a possibility? Yes, that's a possibility. The idea that our next president could be Larry the Cable Guy...is that a possibility? Well, it is an option but it's not a live option. That's a "dead" option. So, options can be "live options" or "dead options."

**Sometimes several options are plausible.**

Like choosing between "vanilla or chocolate or coffee ice cream with Heath chip on plain waffle cone." Or "foam or no foam or you latte at Starbucks." Any of those options are very plausible.

**Some options force you to make a decision.**

The stakes are higher here with this kind of option. Withholding your commitment is not an option here. To choose not to make decision is a decision in and of itself. It's like there's no middle ground. You're either pregnant or you're not pregnant. No neutrality.

And when it comes to your religious faith decisions, you have to make a decision. You have to decide the answer to questions like these:

**What will I build my life on?** You have to make a decision on this one and even if you decide not to build you life on something that is a decision in and of itself.

**What will my character become?**

**What cause will I serve?**

**What legacy will I leave?**

Now whether we want to think of them that way or not, those are all "God" questions. This is not the kind of issue where I can just stand on the sidelines and say, "I think I'll take a pass on this discussion." If you just drift, you become a practical atheist, and that is a decision in and of itself.

I believe that the greatest opportunity ever offered to a human being is the opportunity to trust Jesus Christ, to know him, to learn from him, to follow him, and to have an ongoing, up-to-date relationship with him. And I believe that life and death and heaven and hell hang in the balance for

everyone who occupies space on planet earth when it comes to deciding about Jesus Christ.

So, I would like to take a few minutes and tell you why I believe that so strongly and why I have given me life to that belief. Now other folks have reasons too but I want to tell you why my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ makes sense to me.

And if you've never chosen, I want to invite you to choose Jesus to be the Lord of your life. So in the time that's left today, I want to run through a few of the reasons why I think that faith in Jesus makes such great sense:

First,

**I believe that the way that people argue suggests that God exists.**

This idea comes by way of a man named C. S. Lewis. How many of you have heard people arguing, or have actually engaged in an argument yourself? When people argue they seldom say, "I want you to do what I want, because I'm smarter and more objective than you are!" No none of say that when we argue. When people argue, here are the kinds of things they say:

*I do way more than my fair share of work around this house, and you see to think that you're on vacation!*

Now we call those people husband and wives.

*He got a bigger piece of dessert. He got a bigger allowance! He did fewer chores. He got a later curfew time than I did, and it's not fair!*

We call those people... "brothers and sisters."

*You're a miserable boss, and this is nothing more than a dysfunctional sweat-shop, and I've been a loyal employee but I'm grossly overworked and criminally underpaid.*

We call those people... "formerly employed."

C.S. Lewis writes about this in *Mere Christianity*. When we argue, we say things like, "That's not right! That's not good! You're not being fair!" And

what we are doing is appealing to a standard that is independent and objective and higher than you and I. We appeal to the idea that there is such a thing as right and wrong.

Many people in our day hold to the belief that right and wrong are subjective—just preference— just kind of like choosing between vanilla and chocolate. You have yours, and I have mine. Everybody is different, so we have different views so *let's all be happy and just love one another*.

At the same time, in this politically correct society in which we live, we often hear people in say, “Don’t impose your beliefs on me.” Do you find it interesting that no one ever says, “Don’t impose your geometry on me?” “Don’t impose your chemistry on me?” Now why is that? Because we assume that mathematics and science are about *objective reality*. But the same person same person that believes math and science are objective realities can believe that things like morals and values are simply subjective preferences—you have yours; I have mine. It’s all just arbitrary. But every time you hear two people argue, it shows we know better. We believe that moral reality is built into the way that life really is or we wouldn’t argue about it.

This is exactly what Paul was writing about when he said:

**Romans 2:15**

**The requirements of the Law [what’s right and what’s wrong]are written on people’s hearts [and when we argue, we show that we know this.], their consciences also bearing witness and their thoughts, now accusing, now defending them.**

**Every person** in this place this morning, every human being on planet earth being **knows two things:**

- **There is a way we ought to behave.**

There is a code, a standard. We might be fuzzy on the details of it sometimes, but we have a general idea of what it is. We know there is a standard that we all ought to live up to, and here’s the other thing--

- **We all know that we don’t live up to our *oughtness*.** We all fall short. And falling short creates bad stuff in us. Stuff that we need

forgiveness for and stuff we need grace for. Stuff that hinders us. Stuff that drags us down. Stuff we need to get fixed, so we can move on with life.

And every time people argue, they are implying that the universe is not an accident, that there is a moral order, and that there is a law of right and wrong that is built into the way things are, because it was put there by Somebody, and that Somebody was God. The Good News is that He is a gracious God. And that's one reason why I believe in God, because

**Every time you argue, it is evidence for the existence of God.**

Here's another reason:

**I believe the existence of human beings as personal creatures, argues for the existence of God.**

Human nature is such an extraordinary thing, unprecedented in the universe. A writer named G. K. Chesterton around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century said one of the reasons he became convinced about Christianity is because it captures the fullness and the mystery and the contradiction and the paradox of life...especially of persons. Chesterton says that when it comes to human nature, there are some approaches like Stoicism (happiness is only found in taking the "ups and downs" of life in stride because "ups and downs" are destined to happen; so just learn to show emotional indifference to whatever comes your way because there is nothing you can do about it; what is admirable is to show patience and endurance in the face of adversity. The Essenes were a branch of the Pharisees who took Stoicism to new level) that are pessimistic about human nature... "Don't get your hopes up. Don't expect too much." Then there are some approaches, certain forms of humanism that teach "Man is the measure of all things," and that have an exalted, optimistic view of human nature.

But when it comes to human nature, Christianity is not just pessimistic or optimistic or blandly "middle of the road." It is wildly pessimistic:

**Human Nature and Christianity**



**Jeremiah 17:9**

**The heart is deceitful and wicked above all things.**

But when it comes to Christians, Christianity is wildly optimistic and hopeful about:

### **Christians and Christianity**



#### **1 John 3:2**

**Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.**

Christianity crafts all this truth and wonder and mystery and darkness and potential for goodness in the human condition. Naturalism says that human beings are just a collection of atoms. Some folks believe that Darwin showed that human beings are different in degree, but not really different in kind from any other creatures.

The Bible says we are a different *kind* of being, and that we are made in the image of God...we are possessors of a soul. I believe that in our hearts, we know this to be true about ourselves. Do you know one of the ways that we know this to be true? *We never put an animal on trial.*

When someone is bitten by a lion, when somebody gets mauled by a bear, when someone lives in a sick, co-dependent relationship with a cat—and all cat owners live in a “sick co-dependent relationship with their cats—we don’t put that animal on trial. We don’t sue animals. We don’t take animals o court. We just say, “That’s nature. That’s the nature of a bear. That’s the nature of a lion. That’s simply the product of its nature and its training.” But we put human beings on trial, because we know they are not just products of instinct and training. They have reasoning faculties. They have freedom. They are moral agents. And what’s at stake here is nothing less than the notion of personhood: that there is something wondrous and mysterious and God-breathed and holy about a person. A person ought not to be enslaved. A person ought to be free.

*Materialism, or Darwinism, says that people do not have a moral nature. They are not free. They are just products of causes and forces. But nobody raises a child like that. Nobody makes a friend like that. We know better. I think the sheer existence of persons, or personal beings that reason and think and love tells us there is a God.*

Another reason:

**When you look at persons, they all have this desire to have purpose and meaning in their life, to have significance.**

And I believe that our drive for purpose and meaning and significance is another evidence for the existence of God.

Everybody you know—no matter what they say or what they claim about the afterlife, or what they claim about God, or what they claim about spirituality—everybody wants a way of life that has meaning, that has significance, and that has purpose. When it comes to making a choice, every choice has two components to it.

One part of the choice is I have to have certain beliefs, but then another part of making a choice is I have to have a purpose, an intention, a desire. For example, let's say you want to go to Lukenbach, Texas.

*Let's go to Luckenbach Texas with Waylon and Willie and the boys  
This successful life we're livin' got us fueding  
like the Hatfield and McCoys  
Between Hank Williams pain songs, Newberry's train songs  
and blue eyes cryin' in the rain out in Luckenbach Texas  
ain't nobody feelin' no pain*

So if want to go to Lukenbach you hop on HWY 84, shoot south on 87, but just south of Fredericksburg you've got to make a decision. There's a fork in the road; you can take 87 down to Kerrville or you can take HWY 290 toward Lukenbach. So if you believe that this particular road will lead to Lukenbach, then you will have to make a choice to go down that road. Now if you ask, "Is that a rational, reasonable choice? What you will have to consider is "Is it rational to believe that this road is going to lead Lukenback? Can I trust TexDot?"

Then the other question is: Is my purpose rational? Will Waylon and Willie and the boys really be there?

Church, here's the thing: Atheism, materialism in general, would say that

you cannot analyze the rationality of someone's belief. It might be rational; it might be irrational, but they would say that when it comes to purpose, there is nothing about rationality connected with our purposes. Purposes are not rational or irrational. They're just whatever anybody wants to do. There's nothing about the Universe or the nature of reality that says anything about whether one purpose is better, worse, truer, more false than another one.

Whatever your purpose is—whether it's greed, pleasure, status, or “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die”—whatever it is, it's your deal. But I believe in our hearts, we know better. I believe in our hearts we know that to give our lives to unworthy causes is not just unsatisfying, and that's irrational. We know this.

What that means is we all know at some level we're not accidents. We're made for a purpose. That's why we have a hunger for it.

I believe that to ask God to help you to know and fulfill your purpose is infinitely wiser, infinitely saner, infinitely more rational than to bet your one and only existence on the notion that the Universe is a random accident that does not care whether you are noble or evil, whether you live or die. I don't think to bet your one and only life on the notion that the Universe doesn't care if you're good or evil...I don't think that's smart. Excuse me, let me be clearer about this--I think that's stupid!

I've never heard anyone say, “Gary, one day I realized there was no God, no one behind reality, no life after death. I realized existence is a meaningless accident, begun by chance and destined for oblivion, and it changed my life. I used to be addicted to alcohol, but now the “Law of Natural Selection” has set me free.

I've never heard the story of an accidental, meaningless universe impacting someone's life. Now, I've heard people say they were oppressed by the form of faith that they followed and felt a sense of liberation when they didn't believe it was true any more. But I've never seen anyone receive the power to live the kind of life and become the kind of person they want to be by hearing that there is no story behind the universe.

I've never heard anyone say, “Now I have found a meaningful existence from meaningless reality.”

So we come to a fork in the road.

**A moral nature**  
**Made in the image of God**  
**Chosen by God**  
**Destined for meaning and purpose**

**No moral nature**  
**Random collection of atoms**  
**Natural Selection**  
**Meaningless existence**

There's a decision to be made. To make no decision is a decision in and of itself. If you have never made this decision, if you've never made this commitment before, Jesus comes to you right now and says,

Would you follow me? You may have questions. You may have doubts, I know all that, but you have this one life, and you've got to build it on something. Will you build it on me?

And you can respond by saying "Jesus, I want to do it. I don't know everything. I don't understand everything, but I know I have a choice to make. So I'm trusting you today to forgive my sin and my guilt. With your help I will become a disciple of Jesus Christ. With your empowering I will do what you ask of me. I will trust you to answer my questions as we journey together. Today I will make you the center, the authority, the foundation of my life.

And if you've made that decision today, then just know you belong to Him, and He'll walk with you. You could let somebody else who is a follower of Jesus know, and he or she can help you grow as well.