

The Iran and Israel Conflict Crisis: 4 Insights Relating to the U.S., Israel, and the Middle East

Iran and Israel Conflict Crisis and Regional Security

Iran nuclear threat: Does it pose a threat to the U.S., Israel, and the Middle East? What can we learn about the Iran and Israel conflict?

Many Americans might wonder why the president has focused so much attention on Iran. After all, it is a country 6,000 miles away in the Middle East. Some may also conclude that military action against Iranian leadership might not be warranted since the previous administration did not deploy troops or significant military hardware to the region.

Two years ago, however, the Biden administration considered action after more than 160 attacks on U.S. troops took place in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. There were also about 40 clashes with the Houthis in the Red Sea. Iran funded many of these attacks, either directly or indirectly. They were part of a mounting proxy battle between the U.S. and Iran.

At the time, reporters asked what President Biden would do. Some argued that the U.S. and Iran have essentially been at war for decades. Even the Pentagon press secretary

acknowledged that this was true if one considers the larger conflict. To understand why reporters were asking this question, we need to review some history.

Modern History of Iran

The conflict between Iran and the United States can be traced back to 1953, when the U.S. cooperated in overthrowing Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Afterward, the Shah of Iran (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) was placed in power.

The U.S. viewed the Shah as a key ally and a pillar of security in the Middle East. His pro-Western government advanced Western interests and served as a Cold War counterbalance to Soviet influence. The United States supported Iran through significant arms sales and strong economic ties, despite concerns about the Shah's authoritarian rule.

The turning point came in 1979 when the Shah was overthrown by radical Islamic clerics led by Ayatollah Khomeini. The Iranian Revolution transformed the U.S. from an ally into "The Great Satan" in the eyes of the new regime.

This hostility became clear when the Iranian Revolutionary Guard seized the U.S. Embassy and took 52 American diplomats hostage. They were not released until President Reagan was sworn in on January 20, 1981. This crisis marked the beginning of what many view as a half-century-long undeclared conflict between Iran and the United States.

The U.S. strategy had been to promote stability in the Middle East. That effort became increasingly difficult because of Iran's growing influence. Complicating matters further, Saudi Arabia supported anti-Western Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, while Turkey—though a NATO member—began positioning itself as a leader of a renewed Islamic political

vision in the region.

Iran has engaged in a proxy war against the U.S. for decades. In April 1983, Iranian-backed Hezbollah forces bombed the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people. Later that year, Hezbollah bombed the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 service members.

Despite these attacks, decisive retaliation never fully materialized. Iranian influence continued to expand through proxy groups across the region.

During the Iraq War following 9/11, evidence showed that Iran was supplying weapons and support that contributed to American casualties. While the U.S. was focused on Iraq as the primary enemy, Iranian operatives and Iranian-manufactured munitions were also responsible for attacks on U.S. troops.

Iran is often described as the chief sponsor of terrorism in the Middle East. It funds groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, which regularly target Israel and U.S. interests. Israeli and American responses to these groups are now reshaping the balance of power in the region.

Missiles and Nuclear Weapons

Iran possesses the largest stockpile of ballistic missiles in the Middle East. Many of these missiles have a range of up to 2,000 kilometers, allowing them to strike Israel and other countries throughout the region.

Iran has also demonstrated its long-term intentions toward Western nations. Earlier this century, it launched ballistic missiles from ships in the Caspian Sea. Although the test missile did not carry a nuclear warhead, it demonstrated how such a weapon could be deployed.

A missile detonated high in the atmosphere could create an

electromagnetic pulse (EMP), potentially destroying the U.S. electrical grid and causing catastrophic damage.

If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, it would destabilize the Middle East and surrounding regions. However, the latest assessment from Tulsi Gabbard suggests that Iran is not currently building a nuclear weapon and that its supreme leader has not authorized such a program since it was suspended in 2003. Some officials, however, dispute this assessment.

The Donald Trump administration resumed talks with Iran after withdrawing from the nuclear accord several years earlier. Initial negotiations produced few concrete results. Meanwhile, a United Nations nuclear watchdog reported that Iran violated nuclear nonproliferation agreements.

Iran maintains that its nuclear development is intended for civilian energy. However, the discovery of secret nuclear sites has raised concerns that the program may have military ambitions.

Tensions escalated when Iran launched a massive ballistic missile attack on Israel following Israeli strikes on Iranian targets.

In June 2025, Israel launched **Operation Rising Lion**, targeting key nuclear and military facilities, including an enrichment site. The strike lacked the bunker-busting capability needed to fully destroy the facility.

Soon afterward, the United States launched **Operation Midnight Hammer**, striking several Iranian nuclear locations. The administration announced that the sites had been "obliterated." Yet satellite imagery later suggested Iran had begun rebuilding portions of its nuclear infrastructure.

Diplomatic talks between the United States and Iran have produced few breakthroughs. Negotiations aim to limit uranium

enrichment, restrict missile development, and address human rights concerns within Iran.

Since diplomacy failed, the Trump administration began military endeavors. However, many Americans remain wary of another prolonged conflict in the Middle East. Limited strikes might damage nuclear facilities, but meaningful regime change would likely require a large-scale ground invasion.

Religious Component

Another reason [Iran's nuclear ambitions](#) raise concern is the religious worldview of its leadership.

Most Iranians are Shia Muslims, and a significant branch follows the tradition known as the “**Twelvers**.” This sect recognizes twelve divinely appointed leaders known as Imams.

According to their belief system, the twelfth Imam—often called the Mahdi or messianic figure—is currently in hiding and will return during a time of global conflict.

Just as Christianity has an eschatology, or doctrine of the end times, Shia Islam also holds an apocalyptic worldview. However, its narrative is essentially the reverse of what Christians read in the book of Revelation.

Twelver theology teaches that global conflict may precede the arrival of the Mahdi. Some analysts fear that extremist interpretations of this belief could view large-scale conflict—including potential attacks on Israel or the United States—as a way to usher in that messianic era.

During the Cold War, the United States relied on the doctrine of **Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)** to deter nuclear war. The Soviet Union would not launch nuclear weapons because retaliation would guarantee its destruction.

Critics argue that radical religious interpretations might weaken this deterrence model. Some Twelver believers might assume divine intervention would protect them from destruction.

Author Joel C. Rosenberg explored this scenario in his political thriller *The Twelfth Imam*.

Yet there is another side to this story. Reports indicate that Christianity is growing rapidly in Iran, with some describing the Iranian church as the fastest-growing Christian movement in the world.

Christians should continue praying for Iranian believers who often face persecution. We should also pray for U.S. leaders and their allies as they navigate these complex challenges.

The Persian people are an ancient civilization that deserves peace and freedom. Unfortunately, many Iranians suffer under economic sanctions and harsh authoritarian leadership.

They deserve both our prayers and our compassion.

[For more articles by Kerby Anderson follow here: https://probe.org/author/kerbyanderson/](https://probe.org/author/kerbyanderson/)

Christian Nationalism and the Question of Racial Purity

Tom Davis examines how some Christian Nationalists call for racial purity despite the lack of a biblical basis for the idea.

In recent years, a new political movement has started within

Christian circles. This movement, Christian Nationalism^{1}, is theologically diverse. They have disagreements on issues like race, discipleship, and the relationship of church and state.

There is a group within Christian Nationalism that has become concerned about racial purity. They stop short of calling interracial marriages a sin, but they do claim that it is God's norm for people to marry within their own race. Their view of race seems to be based on skin color more than anything else. My understanding is that they would be fine with a French man marrying a Norwegian woman, but they think that an Asian man should not marry a Hispanic woman. Granted, all these particular Christian Nationalists are white, so the conversation tends to focus on white people marrying outside the white race.

Christian Nationalists will use DNA markers to show that different races exist, but their reason for claiming that the races should not intermarry is an argument from scripture. They think it is unbiblical for a white woman to marry a man of another race. In this article, I will examine their argument and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. Next, I will assess their understanding of the relevant biblical passages. Finally, I will consider the passages they reference and explore the biblical teaching on race.^{2}

The Argument for Racial Segregation

The argument for racial segregation begins with creation (Genesis 1-2). Christian Nationalists admit that **“all humanity descends from Adam and shares a common origin**, essence, and dignity.”^{3} Christian Nationalists admit that all human races descended from Adam. Biblically, all races bear the image of God and can be traced back to Adam and Eve. They are equal in dignity. However, God's intention for humanity was for them to spread out throughout the earth, and the races would naturally occur in different regions of the world.

Their argument then proceeds to Genesis 10, which is known as the Table of Nations. Due to the sinfulness of humanity, God destroyed everyone except Noah and his family. Then Genesis 10 lists the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

"These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood." (Genesis 10:32).

The author's understanding of this verse makes the separation of races and nations one of the norms that God wants people to live by.

The Genesis narrative proceeds to the rebellion at the Tower of Babel. The people will not disperse. They try to build a tower that will reach heaven, so God decides to confuse their language and to force the different nations to disperse throughout the land. Christian Nationalists claim:

"Biblically, God's design post-Babel emphasizes diversity through separated nations and peoples (Genesis 10-11; Acts 17:26), with endogamy [*Note: per Wikipedia, "Endogamy is the cultural practice of only marrying within a specific social group, religious denomination, caste, or ethnic group, rejecting any from outside of the group or belief structure as unsuitable for marriage or other close personal relationships."*] as the normative pattern in Israel's laws (for example, Deuteronomy 7:3-4 warning against intermarriage with Canaanites to preserve covenant fidelity, though not solely racial)."[{4}](#)

Here, the author connects Genesis 11, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel incident with Acts 17:26, which states, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place." The Christian Nationalist understands Acts 17:26 to be reaffirming the Table of Nations in Genesis 10.

This gives them an Old Testament verse and a New Testament verse that they think justifies their view that God desires the races to remain separate. The author also references Romans 9:3, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh," to support his argument that the normal practice according to the Bible ought to be marrying within one's own race.

A Critique of the Argument

This group of Christian Nationalists claims that God's intent was for people to spread across the earth and naturally develop different nations. The issue is that there is no mention of nations prior to the Flood. If the concept and development of nations were something that God intended as part of his creation of mankind, why is it not mentioned before the Flood, or before the fall of Adam and Eve? The structure of the Genesis narrative indicates that nations did not develop until after the Flood, and this was a consequence of sin.

This position also does not address whether there will be nations after the return of Christ. Are the races still to remain segregated after Christ returns? Will there be nations on the New Earth that are ruled from Jerusalem? It seems that the Christian Nationalist answer to these questions would be yes, people will still be segregated into nations and races. If that is the case, the Christian Nationalist needs to explain why the races need to be segregated and the nations need to exist when Christ is ruling from Jerusalem. The Christian Nationalist also believes that this diversity was intended by God, that interracial marriages and multicultural nations are in violation of God's command to subdue the earth, and that they violate God's creation of diversity.

If people were not originally intended to divide into different nations and races, why are races and people divided?

The consistent answer to the question for the Christian Nationalist would be to say that this segregation is God's will. This seems to imply that the races would have to remain segregated after the return of Christ as well. The Christian Nationalist believes that interracial marriage somehow violates God's creation of diversity. How can that be? When two people of different races have children, those children are not a pure race. This means that interracial marriage does not restrict racial diversity; it increases it.

The Christian Nationalist's appeal to Deuteronomy 7:3-4, Acts 17:26, and Romans 9:3 simply takes these verses out of context. In Deuteronomy, the restriction from marrying people from the tribes in the land that the Israelites were about to invade is not about racial purity. This passage is about spiritual purity. Moses is telling the people that they are not to marry people who worship other gods. We see Rahab (Joshua 6), Deborah (Judges 4), and Ruth who reject their pagan gods, turn to the One True God, and join the Israelite society. God allowed this because they rejected other gods, which shows the issue was not racial purity.

In Acts 17:27 Paul is speaking in front of the philosophers in Athens. Paul tells the philosophers that God made the nations from one man. In Romans 9:3 Paul is explaining God's sovereignty over all nations. These verses are irrelevant to the question of segregating the nations. The burden of proof is on the Christian Nationalist to show that these verses support their view of segregating races and nations. They have not met that burden.

The Biblical View of the Nations and Races

If the Christian Nationalist is wrong, then what does the Bible teach about nations? Things do start with God creating Adam and Eve and telling them to reproduce and subdue the

earth (Genesis 1:28). God's intent for humanity was for them to govern the earth as His local representatives.[{5}](#) However, things went wrong because Adam and Eve were disobedient and ate from the tree of life (Genesis 3:1-7). Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation of Satan instead of remaining faithful to God, which led to their banishment from the garden. The human family that God created was now broken. The Fall reveals that there is a conflict between spiritual beings, and between the people of God and the spiritual beings that followed Satan.

Humanity continues in their sin, which eventually leads to the Flood (Genesis 6), which is followed by the incident at the tower of Babel. The people were supposed to spread out and subdue the earth. Instead, the people stayed close together and built a tower. This tower was something like a ziggurat, which was meant to call gods down to earth. In building this tower, the people once again rejected their relation to God.[{6}](#) In response, God confused their languages and dispersed them throughout the earth. The dispersion of the people and the confusion of languages were the result of the rebellion of the people against God. Deuteronomy 32 is a record of the nations.

After the people were dispersed throughout the earth, the narrative of the Bible continues through the development, then the life of Israel. Jesus comes and trains His apostles. Jesus has been crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven. His disciples are waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, the event of Pentecost is recorded. At Pentecost each person hears the apostles speak in their own language. The apostles are most likely speaking in Aramaic, but the Greeks who are present hear them in Greek, the Romans hear them in Latin, etc. This is an undoing of the confusion and division of people that occurred at Babel. As a result of their rebellion at Babel the people were dispersed throughout the world. At Pentecost the undoing of Babel, as well as the original sin in the garden, begins.[{7}](#)

Conclusion

When we examine the Christian Nationalist case for racial purity and against interracial marriage, we can see that they have not met the burden of proof for their claim. They end up reading their view into the text of the Bible instead of allowing the text of the Bible to shape them. Will one face challenges in an interracial marriage? Yes, but those challenges come from what is ultimately a sinful attitude against one race or the other. The picture the Biblical narrative paints is one of people rebelling against God by refusing to spread out and care for the earth and trying to control God to get what they wanted. This rebellion resulted in a curse, and beginning with Pentecost, God is undoing the curse.

While the Christian Nationalist is mistakenly concerned about racial purity in marriage, Christians should be concerned about spiritual purity. Paul makes two points in his letters. First, Paul states, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). What Paul points out here is that a marriage between two people that have different worldviews will often put the Christian in situations where they will have to choose between their spouse and faithfulness to Christ, including fellowship with other believers. I experienced this early on in my walk with Christ. I left the church when I was growing up. When I returned to Christ, I naturally started attending church. I was dating a woman who was not a Christian and was not interested in attending church. I went to church three times a week. Eventually my church attendance, along with other disagreements, led to us breaking up.

Second, if you are a Christian and are already married to someone who is not, you should not get divorced if the

marriage relationship is healthy. Paul discusses this in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. Paul teaches that if the unbeliever wants to remain married, the Christian should agree. If the couple has children, divorcing when the unbeliever does not want one can cause resentment among the children. Paul also teaches that the unbeliever can become “made holy” because of the spouse.

Christian Nationalists are correct in their view that people of all races are created in the image of God. They also admit that the lives of people of all races are valuable to God. Their error is in thinking that God is concerned with racial purity. They end up reading their view of racial purity into the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel. God did create the races, and Scripture never commands or implies that the races should be separated.

Notes

1. Per Britannica, “Christian nationalism is an ideology that seeks to fuse a nation’s identity, laws, and public life with a particular vision of Christianity, treating the nation as if it should be explicitly Christian in character and governance.”

2. While I think I know who wrote the articles, they are technically anonymous, and I have not verified who the author is. Since I have not verified the identity of the author, I will not name him. I will say that I found the link to the substack with these articles on Joel Webbon’s account on X.

3. nxrstudios.substack.com/p/the-table-of-nations-and-the-biblical

4. nxrstudios.substack.com/p/a-historic-christian-view-of-interracial

5. Block, Daniel I. *Covenant: The Framework of God’s Grand Plan of Redemption* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids) 2021, 24.

6. Heiser, Michael S. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Lexham Press, Bellingham WA) 2015, 114-115.

7. Heiser, 298-302.

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Why Empires Fall

Kerby Anderson looks at six insightful books and videos exploring alarming parallels between the U.S. and failed empires of history.

Collapse of Empires

If you study world history, you realize that empires come and go. In this article I want to look at what has happened to some of the major empires because we can also learn about what is happening today in our country. I will be quoting from recent books that have documented the decline and fall of empires.

First, I will merely quote from a recent YouTube video^{[1](#)} that describes a pattern in history that has destroyed three global superpowers in the last 500 years: Spain, Britain, and the Soviet Union. Today, the U.S. is following a similar pattern.



In 1590, Spain was the richest empire on earth. Spain controlled half the world's gold and silver. Spain's military dominated Europe. Their currency was accepted everywhere. Yet within 80 years, the Spanish government was bankrupt.

The Spanish coin that was supposed to be pure silver became 50% copper, then 75% copper. By 1600 Spanish coin contained barely any silver. Inflation exploded. Spain went into a debt spiral and borrowed constantly. Manufacturing declined. Agriculture stagnated.

In 1914, Britain ruled the largest empire in human history. At the time, it was said that the sun never set on British empire. Britain controlled 25% of the land surface. The pound sterling was the global reserve currency. Yet within 40 years, the empire was gone. The currency collapsed.

Britain had too many military commitments around the world. They won World War I, but at a terrible cost. By 1931, Britain had to abandon the gold standard. The pound lost 25% of its value overnight.

In 1991, the Soviet Union still seemed dominant. It was another superpower. It had nuclear weapons, global influence, and satellites spanning the globe. Yet the Soviet Union ceased to exist 900 days later due to economic implosion.

The idea that nations follow a pattern as they collapse isn't new. Decades ago, I did a week of radio programs on ["The Decline of a Nation."](#) A decade later, I did another week on ["When Nations Die"](#) because of a book that was published with that title.

What is new is how this video explains the seven stages of collapse and applies them to previous empires. But the key point of the video is the reality that America has already completed five of the seven stages. We aren't approaching the pattern but are within it.

As I often suggest, we can resolve some of these issues, but the first step is to admit that we are following this pattern of collapse. Below we will be looking at some of the reasons other empires fell and connect it to what is happening in our world today.

End of Everything

Now we will look at the book by Victor Davis Hanson, *The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation.* [{2}](#)

In his book he provides four historical examples: the city-state of Thebes, ancient Carthage, Byzantine Constantinople, and the Aztec Empire. The leaders believed their illustrious pasts would be enough to prevent their destruction. Alexander the Great, Roman Scipio, Muslim Mehmet, and the Spanish conquistador Cortés proved them wrong.

He explains that the leveling of Thebes by Alexander the Great, the erasure of Carthage by Scipio, the conquest and transformation of Constantinople by Sultan Mehmet, and the obliteration of the Aztecs all marked the end of cultures and civilizations.

Alexander, for example, brought an end to classical Greece. The fall of Constantinople marked the end of the Mediterranean world as the nexus of European commerce. And the largest Christian cathedral in the West became the greatest mosque in the Islamic world.

The book is a warning to us today, but I also realize that few people will read his book. That is why I would encourage you to watch his five-minute video summary produced by Hillsdale College. [\[3\]](#)

He says his book “is about the existential destruction of the losing side in a war. This is very rare in history. It doesn’t happen very often. But when it does, it should enlighten us how it does why it does, and can it happen again?”

He explains that he wrote his book “not just as a historical journey to document the rare cases of a targeted nation being completely destroyed, but as a warning that human nature doesn’t change.” We naively assumed that globalization would create a common humanity and bring an end to global conflict. Instead, he “noticed that there were more and more existential threats coming from autocratic regimes.”

He reminds us that the same mentalities and delusions that doomed the Thebans, Carthaginians, the Byzantines, and the

Aztecs are still with us today. Even as they were about to be slaughtered, some may still have been thinking, "It cannot happen here."

He wants us to be aware that what happened in the past could happen in the future. We need to learn from the past and protect ourselves in the future. This is a sobering call for contemporary readers to heed the lessons of obliteration, lest we blunder into catastrophe once again. He reminds us that the world needs a strong America so that we can prevent "the end of everything."

Peak Human

Let's now turn to examine the book *Peak Human*, [\[4\]](#) written by historian Johan Norberg.

His book explains what we can learn from the rise and fall of "golden ages." He describes seven of humanity's greatest civilizations from ancient Athens and the Roman Republic to Renaissance Italy, the Dutch Republic, and today's Anglosphere.

Each had their golden age and contributed to our world today. Ancient Greece gave us democracy and the rule of law. From the Muslim world came algebra and modern medicine. The Dutch Republic gave us economic ideas and some of the greatest artistic movements.

He explained that he picked these civilizations because each of them exemplifies what can be described as a golden age. This was a period of innovations that revolutionized many fields and sectors in a short period of time. The characteristics are cultural creativity, scientific discoveries, technological achievements, and economic growth.

He laments that human history is a long list of deprivations and horrors. But it is also the source of the knowledge, institutions, and technologies that have set most of humanity

free from such horrors. It requires raw material, but the citizens needed to be free to experiment and innovate, without being subject to feudal lords, centralized governments, or raving armies.

In a recent interview with John Stossel^{5}, he talked about how Rome inspired our form of government, a republic with a system of checks and balances. "There is a reason why we have a Senate, and they meet in the Capitol," Norberg explained. "We borrow these ideas from the Romans."

Of course, these empires fell. "The emperors wanted to become popular by handing out free stuff to people. Originally, this started small. You just handed the very poor means of subsistence. But it was popular, so the group that lived on the public's expense grew larger all the time."

Eventually the ever-expanding system of entitlements became too much. Norberg observed, "Romans could conquer the world, but they couldn't do entitlement reform." To pay for this, the Roman emperors devalued their currency by putting less gold and silver in each coin. He concluded that, "Inflation was much worse than barbarian invaders."

This sounds like our world today. Modern governments, including our own, make more financial promises than they can keep. To pay for it, they print more money. We have been living in a golden age, but the question before us today is whether it will continue.

Loss of Moral Values

In this section we will look at an essay by Allen Mashburn who reminds us that "Societies That Surrender Moral Foundation Historically Self-Destruct."^{6}

This is not a new idea. Decades ago, I did a week of radio programs on "[The Decline of a Nation](#)." A decade later, I did another week on "[When Nations Die](#)" because of a book that was

published with that title. And more recently I even did [a week of programs](#) based on a book that compared America to Rome.

The reason for Mashburn's article were several events that took place during Pride Month. He "never envisioned a day where transvestites would lecture us on human biology, or sterilizers would pose as health professionals advocating for human rights. It seems that our nation has descended into a state of utter madness, where men can now claim pregnancy and the number of genders rivals the alphabet."

Those issues are just a few of the many legitimate concerns which point to the well-documented decline and fall of other civilizations. Greece tolerated and even celebrated immoral behavior. And "the decline of the Roman Empire can be attributed to the abandonment of strong familial bonds and moral values in favor of weakness and laxity." He observes that the similarity between Rome and America is alarming.

Of course, the pattern we recognize in Greece and Rome can be seen in other civilizations in the past. That would include the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and even the nation of Israel. In Isaiah 5:20 we read that God pronounced judgment on Israel. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

Of course, there is another side of this equation. Mashburn reminds us that "whenever a nation upholds high moral standards, it reaches the pinnacle of success." Yes, it is true that nations decline when they lose a moral foundation for society. But they also flourish when it upholds morality and integrity while also supporting and encouraging strong families.

He also quotes from the book, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, by Randy Alcorn. He warns that unless our country experiences spiritual repentance and undergoes a

profound reversal of moral values, we risk inviting the same judgment that befell Sodom and Gomorrah.

That is why Christians should devote themselves to daily prayers for our nation's spiritual and moral well-being. The only way to reverse this downward moral spiral is for a spiritual revival and spiritual repentance in this country.

America's Expiration Date

Finally, we will look at a book by Cal Thomas, *America's Expiration Date*.[\[7\]](#)

He asks, what is America's future? The book came out years ago but has a new preface and is more relevant today. [He was on my radio program](#) to talk about the fall of empires and the future of the United States.

He begins with an observation by Sir John Glubb, who wrote *The Fate of Empires and the Search for Survival*. He noticed an interesting historical fact. The average age of a nation or empire's greatness is only 250 years. Most nations lose their way in a relatively short amount of time.

Using that ruler, Cal Thomas gives us a history lesson of the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Arab Empire, the Spanish Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, and the Russian Empire. He concludes with the United States.

Each empire fell for different reasons, but they are lessons to us today. Sometimes they fell because they became too prosperous and thus too apathetic. Sometimes they fell because the empire was over extended. Most had a period of decadence and decline. The Spanish empire was so riven with conflict, they were never invaded because other countries saw nothing worth conquering.

Persia's decline was due to class struggle. The common people,

who were not part of the upper class, began organizing riots and revolts. Kings became greedy and started stealing from the nation's wealth rather than sharing the wealth with the people. The social structure collapsed.

As we have discussed above, Rome's fall was gradual. The familiar saying, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Neither was it destroyed in a day. As the Roman empire grew, more money needed to be provided to the military. The empire's infrastructure suffered. And the common people suffered because the ruling class cared more about what was on the next horizon than what was at home.

He does believe that there is still time to resurrect the republic, but the answer can't be found in politicians. Our future doesn't depend on the White House, but instead is dependent on what we do in our house.

Cal Thomas ends his book with valuable suggestions. First, set standards of decency and morality for your yourself and your family. Reevaluate the education of your children. Don't send them to schools or universities that have largely become propaganda centers for secular progressives. Gather with other believers to worship, celebrate, and to encourage one another. Daily obey the call to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19), often witnessing with words and actions.

Notes

1. The 7-Stage Collapse Pattern, www.youtube.com/watch?v=wb39CeK_yWg.
2. Victor Davis Hanson, *The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation*, NY: Basic Books, 2024.
3. Victor Davis Hanson, www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8c0EuIUTTw.
4. Johan Norberg, *Peak Human*, London: Atlantic Books, 2025.
5. John Stossel, *Golden Ages*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=opHnY8tjzug
6. Allen Mashburn, "Societies That Surrender Moral Foundation Historically Self-Destruct,"

amgreatness.com/2023/07/06/societies-that-surrender-moral-foundation-historically-self-destruct/.

7. Cal Thomas, *America's Expiration Date*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020.

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The Liberal Mind

Kerby Anderson tries to understand the liberal mind from a biblical perspective. What are the assumptions the liberals make? How do those assumptions square with the Bible?

As we begin this discussion, I want to make a clear distinction between the terms “liberal” and “leftist.” We often use the terms interchangeably but there is an important difference.



Dennis Prager wrote about this and even described those differences in a PragerU video.^{1} His argument is that traditional liberalism has far more in common with conservatism than it does with leftism. Here are some examples he uses to make his point.

Liberals and leftists have a different view of race. The traditional liberal position on race is that the color of one's skin is insignificant. By contrast, leftists argue that the notion that race is insignificant is itself racist. Liberals were committed to racial integration and would have

rejected the idea of separate black dormitories and separate black graduations on university campuses.

Nationalism is another difference. Dennis Prager says that liberals always deeply believed in the nation-state. Leftists, on the other hand, oppose nationalism and promote class solidarity.

Superman comics illustrate the point. When the writers of Superman were liberal, Superman was not only an American but also one who fought for "Truth, justice, and the American way." The left-wing writers of Superman comics had Superman announce a few years ago that he was going to speak before the United Nations and inform them that he was renouncing his American citizenship.

Perhaps the best example is free speech. American liberals agree with the statement: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend your right to say it." Leftists today are leading a nationwide suppression of free speech everywhere from the college campuses to the Big Tech companies.

Capitalism and the free enterprise system would be yet another example. Dennis Prager says, "Liberals have always been pro capitalism," though they often wanted government "to play a bigger role" in the economy. Leftists oppose capitalism and are eagerly promoting socialism.

Liberals have had a love of Western civilization and taught it at most universities. They were promoters of the liberal arts and fine arts. In fact, one of the most revered liberals in American history was President Franklin Roosevelt who talked about the need to protect Western Civilization and even Christian civilization.

Today Western Civilization classes are rarely if ever taught in the university. That's because leftists don't believe Western Civilization is superior to any other civilization. Leftists label people who attempt to defend western values as

racist and accuse them of promoting white supremacy. And attempts to promote religious liberty are dismissed as thinly disguised attacks on the LGBT community.

In conclusion, liberals and leftists are very different.

Ethics and a Belief in Right and Wrong

The philosophical foundation for most liberal perspectives is secularism. If you don't believe in God and the Bible, then you certainly don't believe in biblical absolutes or even moral absolutes. Dostoyevsky put it this way: "If God is dead, then everything is permitted."

Even atheists admit that a view of God affects human behavior. Richard Dawkins recently expressed his fear that the removal of religion would be a bad idea for society because it would give people "license to do really bad things."

He likens the idea of God to surveillance, or as he puts it, the "divine spy camera in the sky." [\[2\]](#) People generally tend to do the right thing when someone is watching them. They tend to do bad things when no one is watching. He goes on to add that the "Great Spy Camera theory" isn't a good reason for him to believe in God.

It is also worth mentioning that more and more young people aren't making decisions about right and wrong based on logic but instead based on feelings. I began to notice this decades ago. College students making a statement or challenging a conclusion used to say "I think" as they started a sentence." Then I started to see more and more of them say "I feel" at the start of a sentence. They wouldn't use reason to discuss an issue. Instead, they would use emotion and talk about how they felt about a particular issue.

The liberal mind also has a very different foundation for discussing right and wrong. Dennis Prager recently admitted

that he had been wrong. All of his life, he has said that the left's moral compass is broken. But he has concluded that "in order to have a broken moral compass, you need to have a moral compass to begin with. But the left doesn't have one." [\[3\]](#)

He doesn't mean that conclusion as an attack. It is merely an observation that the left doesn't really think in terms of good and evil. We assume that other people think that way because we think that way. But that is not how most of the people on the left perceive the world.

Karl Marx is a good example. He divided the world by economic class (the worker and the owner). One group was exploiting the other group. Good and evil aren't really relevant when you are thinking in terms of class struggle. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, operated "beyond good and evil."

To the Marxists, "there is no such thing as a universal good or universal evil." Those of us who perceive the world from a Judeo-Christian worldview see ethics as relevant to the moral standard, not the person or their social status.

A biblical view of ethics and morality begins with the reality that God exists and that He has revealed to us moral principles we are to apply to our lives and society. Those absolute moral principles are tied to God's character and thus unchanging.

A Naïve View of Human Nature

In this article we are talking about the liberal mind, while often making a distinction between liberals and the left. When it comes to the proper view of human nature, both groups have a naïve and inaccurate view.

You can discover this for yourself by asking a simple question: Do you believe people are basically good? You will get an affirmative answer from most people in America because

we live in a civilized society. We don't have to deal with the level of corruption or terror that is a daily life in so many other countries in the world.

But if you press the question, you will begin to see how liberals have difficulty explaining the holocaust and Muslim terrorism. Because the liberal mind starts with the assumption that people are basically good. After all, that is what so many secular philosophers and psychologists have been saying for centuries. Two world wars and other wars during the 20th century should have caused most people to reject the idea that people are basically good.

The Bible teaches just the opposite. Romans 3:23 reminds us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" This statement about the deceitfulness of our heart may seem extreme until we realize that Jesus also taught that "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 15:19).

This naïve view of human nature should concern all of us. Young people, two generations after Auschwitz, believe people are basically good. One reason is biblical illiteracy. Another reason is historical illiteracy. A recent survey found two thirds of young people did not know six million died in the Holocaust and nearly half could not name one of the Nazi death camps. [{4}](#)

This naïve view of human nature may also explain another phenomenon we have discussed before. One of the untruths described in the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, is the belief that the battle for truth is "us versus them." [{5}](#) If you think that people are basically good and you have to confront someone who disagrees with you, then they must be a bad person. They aren't just wrong. They are evil.

Tribalism has been with us for centuries. That is nothing new about people joining and defending a tribe. But that has become more intense because of the rhetoric on university campuses and the comments spreading through social media. We don't have to live this way, but the forces in society are making the divisions in society worse by the day.

A biblical perspective starts with the teaching that all are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and thus have value and dignity. But all of us have a sin nature (Romans 5:12). We should interact with others who disagree with us with humility (Ephesians 4:2) and grace (Colossians 4:6).

Big Government

We will now look at why liberals and the left promote big government. The simple answer relates to our discussion above about human nature. If you believe that people are basically good, then it is easy to assume that political leaders and bureaucrats will want to do the best for the citizens.

Christians agree that government is necessary and that it is one of the institutions ordained by God (Romans 13:1-7). There is a role for government to set the rules of governing and to resolve internal disputes through a legal system. Government is not God. But for people who don't believe in God, then the state often becomes God.

Friedrich Hayek wrote about this drive toward big government and the bureaucratic state in his classic book, [*The Road to Serfdom*](#). He argued in his book that "the most important change which extensive government control produces is a psychological change, an alteration in the character of the people."[\[6\]](#)

The character of citizens is changed because they yield their will and decision-making to a more powerful government. They may have done so willingly in order to have a welfare state. Or they may have done so unwillingly because a dictator has

taken control of the reins of power. Either way, Hayek argues, their character has been altered because the control over every detail of economic life is ultimately control of life itself.

Friedrich Hayek wrote *The Road to Serfdom* to warn us that sometimes the road can be paved with good intentions. Most government officials and bureaucrats write laws, rules, and regulations with every good intention. They desire to make the world a better place by preventing catastrophe and by encouraging positive actions from their citizens. But in their desire to control and direct every aspect of life, they take us down the road to serfdom.

He argued that people who enter into government and run powerful bureaucracies are often people who enjoy running not only the bureaucracy but also the lives of its citizens. In making uniform rules from a distance, they deprive the local communities of the freedom to apply their own knowledge and wisdom to their unique situations. A government seeking to be a benevolent god, usually morphs into a malevolent tyrant.

The liberal mind is all too willing to allow political leaders and bureaucrats to make decisions for the public. But that willingness is based on two flawed assumptions. First, human beings are not God and thus government leaders will certainly make flawed decisions that negatively affect the affairs of its citizens. Second, liberals do not believe we have a sin nature (Romans 3:23), and that includes government leaders. Even the best of them will not always be wise, compassionate, and altruistic. This is why the founders of this country established checks and balances in government to limit the impact of sinful behavior.

Tolerance?

If there is one attitude that you would think would be

synonymous with the liberal mind, it would be [tolerance](#). That may have been true in the past. Liberalism championed the idea of free thought and free speech. That is no longer the case.

Liberals have been developing a zero-tolerance culture. In some ways, that has been a positive change. We no longer tolerate racism. We no longer tolerate sexism. Certain statements, certain jokes, and certain attitudes have been deemed off-limits.

The problem is that the politically correct culture of the left moved the lines quickly to begin to attack just about any view or value contrary to the liberal mind. Stray at all from the accepted limits of leftist thinking and you will earn labels like racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic.

Quickly the zero-tolerance culture became the cancel culture. It is not enough to merely label an opponent with a smear, the left demands that an "enemy" lose their social standing and even their job and livelihood for deviating from what is acceptable thought. A mendacious social media mob will make sure that you pay a heavy penalty for contradicting the fundamental truths of the liberal mind.

One phenomenon that promotes this intolerance is the use of smears and negative labels. For example, patriotism and pride in your country is called xenophobia. Acknowledging the innate differences between males and females is labelled sexist. Promoting the idea that we are all of one race (the human race) and that all lives matter is called racist. Questioning whether we should redefine traditional marriage is deemed homophobic. Arguing that very young children should not undergo sex assignment surgery is called transphobia. Pointing out that most terrorist attacks come from Muslim terrorists is labelled Islamophobic.

Should Christians be [tolerant](#)? The answer is yes, we should be tolerant, but that word has been redefined in society to argue

that we should accept every person's behavior. The Bible does not permit that. That is why I like to use the word [civility](#). Essentially, that is the Golden Rule: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12).

Civility requires humility. A civil person acknowledges that he or she does not possess all wisdom and knowledge. That means we should listen to others and consider the possibility that they might be right, and we could be wrong. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself." We can disagree with other without being disagreeable. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that "A gentle answer turns away wrath."

This is an important principle as we try to understand the liberal mind and work to build bridges to others in our society.

Notes

1. Dennis Prager, *Left or Liberal?*, <https://www.prageru.com/video/left-or-liberal/>.
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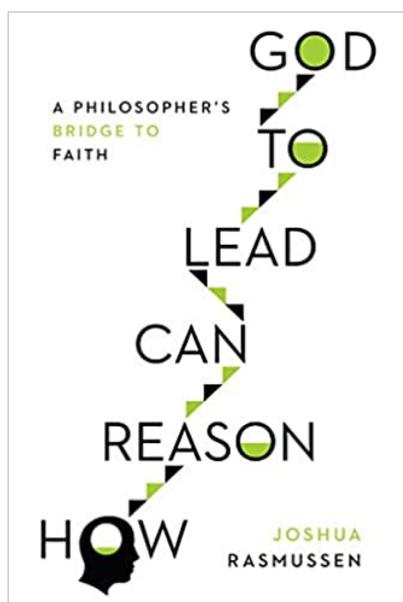
6. F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents, the Definitive Edition*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 48.

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How Reason Can Lead to God – Part 2

Dr. Michael Gleghorn continues to make a compelling case for how reason can lead us, step by step, to the logical conclusion of God's existence based on the book How Reason Can Lead to God.

Foundation of Mind



In this article we're continuing our examination of Christian philosopher Josh Rasmussen's book, *How Reason Can Lead to God*.^{1} In [my previous article](#), I introduced the book and showed how Rasmussen began constructing a “bridge of reason” that led to “an independent, self-sufficient, . . . eternally powerful foundation of all reality.”^{2}



But Rasmussen goes further, arguing that there must also be “a certain *mind-like* aspect” to this foundation.[{3}](#) And that’s what we’ll explore in this article. We’re going to follow Rasmussen’s lead as he takes us over the “bridge of reason.” And once we’ve taken that final step, we’ll see that it’s led us not to some cold, calculating, “mind-like” reality, but to a very “special treasure.”[{4}](#)

But to begin, why does Rasmussen think that the foundation of all reality must be “mind-like”? To answer that question, consider that one of the things the foundation has produced is *you*—and *you* have a mind. As Rasmussen notes, “you are capable of thinking, feeling, and making decisions.”[{5}](#) Indeed, if you’re awake and functioning normally, you have some awareness of what is going on “around” you—and even of what is going on “within” you. That’s because you possess a conscious (even *self-conscious*) mind. How is this to be explained?

According to Rasmussen there are only two live options: either minds ultimately originate from some sort of “mind-like” or “mental” reality, or else they arise solely from a physical process.[{6}](#) Is one of these options better than the other? Rasmussen thinks so, and points to “a construction problem” with the matter-to-mind option.[{7}](#) Here’s the problem. Just as a black steel pipe cannot be constructed out of emerald green toothpaste, so a self-conscious mind cannot be constructed from mindless particles. Particles just aren’t the right thing for constructing the thoughts, feelings, and purposes of a mind. In order to construct a mind, “mental materials” are needed. Hence, the foundation of all reality *must be* mind-like in order to account for the unique features of self-conscious human minds.[{8}](#)

But at this point, some may raise an objection. After all, if we say there’s a construction problem going from matter to minds, then wouldn’t there also be a problem in saying that an

immaterial mind created the material world? The answer is “No.”

Foundation of Matter

Above, we argued that one can't explain the thoughts and intentions of human minds by appealing only to material particles. There must rather be an ultimate mind at the foundation of all reality.

But of course, human beings also have *bodies*. And your body (including your brain) is an example of incredible material complexity. Not only that, but in order for you to be physically alive, the “fundamental parameters” of the universe must be delicately balanced, or “fine-tuned,” with a precision that is mind-boggling. As physicist Alan Lightman observes, “If these fundamental parameters were much different from what they are, it is not only human beings who would not exist. No life of any kind would exist.”^{9}

How should we account for such complexity? Can we explain it in terms of chance?^{10} That's wildly implausible. And better explanations are available. After all, one could *try* to explain the words of your favorite novel by appealing to “chance.” But is that “the *best* explanation?”^{11} Isn't it far more likely that an intelligent mind selected and ordered the words of that story with the intention of communicating something meaningful to others? While the chance hypothesis is *possible*, is it really *probable*? If we're interested in truth, shouldn't we prefer the *best* explanation?

So what *is* a better explanation for the material complexity that we observe—not only in our bodies, but in the fine-tuning of the universe that allows for our existence? If the ordering of the letters and words in your favorite novel is best explained by an intelligent mind, then what about the biological complexity of human beings? Scientists have

observed “that molecular biology has uncovered an analogy between DNA and language.” In short, “The genetic code functions exactly like a language code.”[{12}](#) And just as the words in a novel require an intelligent *author*, the genetic code requires an intelligent *designer*.

Hence, a *foundational mind* offers a good explanation not only for human *minds*, but for the complexity of human *bodies* as well. Moreover, a foundational mind also provides the best explanation for objective moral values.

Foundation of Morals

What is the best explanation for our moral experience in the world? How might we best account for our sense of right and wrong, good and evil? So far, we’ve seen two reasons for thinking that the ultimate foundation of reality is “mind-like.” First, a foundational mind best explains the existence of *human* minds. Second, it also offers the best explanation for the staggering material complexity of the human body and the exquisite “fine-tuning” of the universe that allows for our existence. Might a foundational mind also provide the best explanation for our moral experience? Rasmussen thinks so, and he offers potent reasons for us to think so too.[{13}](#)

Consider our sense of right and wrong. How should this be explained? Rasmussen proposes that our “moral senses are a *window* into a moral landscape.”[{14}](#) Just as our sense of sight helps us perceive objects in the physical world, so our moral sense helps us perceive values in the moral world. Of course, just as our sense of sight may not be perfect, such that a tree appears blurry or indistinct, so also our moral sense may not be perfect, such that a particular action may not be clearly seen as right or wrong. But in each case, even imperfect “sight” can provide *some* reliable information about both the material and moral landscapes.[{15}](#)

How might we best explain both the moral landscape and our experience of it? “Can the particles that comprise a material landscape, with dirt and trees, produce standards of good and bad, right and wrong?”[{16}](#) It’s hard to see how undirected particles could do such a thing. And naturally, they could have no *reason* to do so.

On the other hand, a foundational mind with a moral nature could account for *both* the moral landscape *and* our experience of it. As Rasmussen observes, such a being would account for moral values because of its moral nature.[{17}](#) Further, such a being would have both a *reason* and *resources* to create moral agents (like us) with the ability to perceive these values.[{18}](#) Its reason for creating such agents is that we’re valuable.[{19}](#) A mind-like foundation thus offers a better explanation for human moral experience than mindless particles ever could.

Foundation of Reason

Human minds are special for their ability to reason. This ability helps us think correctly. When we reason correctly, we can begin with certain basic truths and infer yet other truths that logically follow from these. For example, from the basic truths that “all men are mortal” and “Socrates is a man” we can logically infer the further truth that “Socrates is mortal.”

But here an interesting puzzle arises. Where does our ability to reason come from? How might we account for the origin of human reason? And one of the interesting topics tackled by Josh Rasmussen in his book, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, is the origin of reason itself. What’s the best explanation for this incredible ability?

If the universe sprang into being “from nothing, with no mind behind it,” then not only human minds, but even rationality

itself, must ultimately come from mindless material particles.[{20}](#) But as Rasmussen observes, “If people come only from mindless particles, then *reasoning* comes from non-reason.”[{21}](#) But could reason really come from non-reason? Is that the *most plausible* explanation? Or might a *better* explanation be at hand?

The atheistic scientist J. B. S. Haldane once observed, “If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”[{22}](#) For Haldane, if human reason arises entirely from a non-rational historical and physical process, then we have little reason to think that our beliefs are true.

Fortunately, there’s a way out of this difficulty. We can suggest that human reason comes from an ultimately *rational* foundation. In that case, reason comes from reason. We’ve already seen that the best way to account for minds, matter, and morals is by positing a foundational Mind as the source of all reality. And this is also the best way to account for human reason as well. As Rasmussen notes, “by anchoring reason in the nature of the foundation, we can explain how the foundation of all existence can be the foundation of minds, matter, morals . . . and reason itself.”[{23}](#)

In the next section we will follow Rasmussen “to the treasure at the end of the bridge of reason.”[{24}](#)

Perfect Foundation

In this article we’ve seen that a foundational Mind offers the best explanation for the existence of human minds and bodies, moral concepts, and even reason itself. In my previous article, we saw that this foundation is also independent, self-sufficient, and eternally powerful. Today, with some

final help from the Christian philosopher Josh Rasmussen, we want to pull together the various strands of this discussion to see what unifies the various features of this foundation into a single, coherent being. What sort of being might all these features point to? According to Rasmussen, they all point to a *perfect* being. But why does he think so?

Rasmussen argues that a perfect being must have two essential features. First, it must have no defects, or imperfections. And second, it must have “supreme value.”^{25} In other words, a perfect being cannot possibly be improved.

But why think the foundation of all reality is a perfect being? Simply put, the concept of perfection enables us to account for all the characteristics of this being that reason has revealed to us. Perfection accounts for this being’s independent, self-sufficient, and eternally powerful nature. It also accounts for how this being can be the ultimate foundation of other minds, astonishing material complexity, morality, and reason itself. As Rasmussen observes, “Perfection unifies all the attributes of the foundation” and “successfully predicts every dimension of our world.”^{26}

A perfect being is thus the foundation of “every good and perfect gift” that we possess and enjoy, and must surely be described as “the greatest possible treasure.”^{27} Moreover, since this being possesses “the maximal concentration of goodness, value, and power imaginable,” it can only properly be termed “God.”^{28} Thus, by following the “light of reason” to the end of the “bridge of reason,” we have arrived not at meaninglessness or despair, but at “the greatest possible treasure,” the self-sufficient, eternally powerful, supremely rational, and perfectly good, Creator God.

If you would like to explore the work of Josh Rasmussen further, I would recommend reading his book, *How Reason Can Lead to God: A Philosopher’s Bridge to Faith*. You can also visit his website at joshualrasmussen.com.

Notes

1. Joshua L Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God: A Philosopher's Bridge to Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019).
2. See my previous article, "[How Reason Can Lead to God, Part 1.](#)"
3. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 75.
4. Ibid., 8.
5. Ibid., 76.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 77.
8. Ibid., 92. The phraseology of "mental materials" in the previous sentence is also borrowed from Rasmussen.
9. Alan Lightman, "The Accidental Universe," Harper's, December 2011, harpers.org/archive/2011/12/the-accidental-universe/, cited in Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 95.
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12. Walter L. Bradley and Charles B. Thaxton, "Information and the Origin of Life," in *The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer*, ed. J. P. Moreland. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 205.
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14. Ibid., 110. Rasmussen takes the terminology of a "moral landscape" from Sam Harris's book, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2011).
15. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 110-11.
16. Ibid., 119.
17. Ibid., 121.
18. Ibid., 121-22.
19. Ibid., 122.
20. Ibid., 133.
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23. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 135.

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25. Ibid., 137-38.

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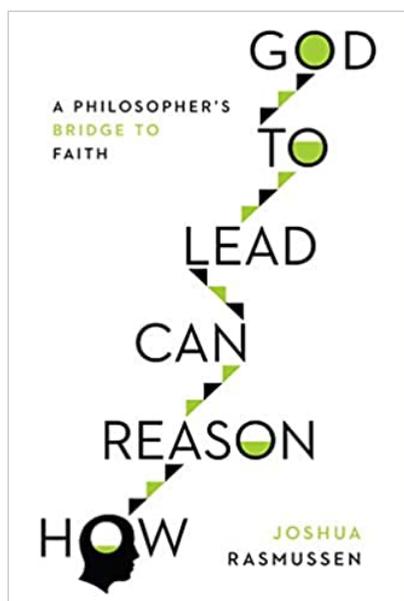
27. Ibid. See also James 1:17.

28. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 148.

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How Reason Can Lead to God – Part 1

Dr. Michael Gleghorn makes a compelling case for how reason can lead us, step by step, to the logical conclusion of God's existence.



In 2019 the Christian philosopher Josh Rasmussen published a little book with the intriguing title, *How Reason Can Lead to God: A Philosopher's Bridge to Faith*. Rasmussen earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame and currently teaches philosophy at Azusa Pacific University.

The book, dedicated to Rasmussen's "skeptical friends," aims "to mark out a pathway . . . that can inspire a greater vision of the ultimate *foundation* of everything."[{1}](#) Now admittedly, this is a tall order. And it leads Rasmussen into some deep philosophical waters. Still, he claims to be writing for a broad audience of truth-seekers—and he has largely managed to make the book accessible to the educated layperson. One reviewer characterized the result of Rasmussen's effort as both an "original presentation of cutting-edge philosophy of religion, and an engaging personal invitation to reason one's way to God."[{2}](#)



Now I realize that you may be thinking, "Well, this doesn't apply to me. I'm not interested in such 'heady' things as this." But do you know someone who is? Perhaps a son or daughter, spouse or co-worker? If so, you'll want to keep reading, for this may be just the sort of thing they need. Rasmussen wrote the book for those who need to think their way carefully through the issues. The sort of person who is not content to dodge difficult questions or settle for superficial answers.

Several philosophers have praised Rasmussen's efforts. Robert Koons, of the University of Texas at Austin, describes the book as "winsome and engaging, drawing the reader into a thrilling adventure . . . of the existence and nature of reality's ultimate foundation."[{3}](#) And J. P. Moreland, of Biola University, compares the study with C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and claims that "Rasmussen's argument for God is developed with such precision and care that, quite frankly, it could not be improved."[{4}](#)

With praise like this for Rasmussen's book, I hope you'll agree that it's worth our time and effort to take a deeper look at its contents. What *is* Rasmussen's argument for God? How does he develop it? Why does he refer to it as a "bridge to faith"? What sort of materials does he use in constructing

his “bridge”? We’ll begin our inquiry in the same place that Rasmussen does, with the deceptively simple observation that *something exists*.[{5}](#)

The Blob of Everything

Let’s begin by considering the book’s subtitle: *A Philosopher’s Bridge to Faith*. What sort of bridge is this? As you might expect, since Rasmussen is a philosopher, this is a “bridge of reason.” But it has an interesting destination, for it leads not to skepticism, but to faith.[{6}](#)

Rasmussen constructs his bridge very carefully. He wants every step in his construction project to be reasonable. In order to accomplish this, he seeks to use quality materials and first-rate tools. His

materials are statements that anyone can see are clearly true. His tools “are rules of logic.” By carefully selecting his materials, and conscientiously using his tools, he constructs “a bridge of reason that leads . . . to a special treasure.”[{7}](#)

Rasmussen begins his project with the claim that something exists. Although few will object to such a claim, some may still have doubts. After all, what if everything you think you experience is just an

illusion? Well, in that case, “the experience of your illusion exists.” Moreover, *you* exist. If you didn’t, you couldn’t have any doubts about reality. In order to have such doubts, you must *first* exist. Thus, Rasmussen’s first claim, that something exists, seems quite secure.[{8}](#)

Next, Rasmussen bundles every existing thing, of whatever sort, into a comprehensive whole, which he aptly dubs the “blob of everything.” This “blob” includes every existing thing, the totality of reality. Since every existing thing is included in the “blob of everything,” there is nothing

“outside” or “beyond” it. It is *everything*. Hence, the blob cannot have its cause, or reason for being, in anything outside it (for, of course, there *isn't* anything outside the blob of *everything*).[{9}](#)

Now this is strange! My car, cat, and computer were each created by causes beyond themselves. My car had a car maker. My cat had parents. But something about the “blob of everything” isn't like this. It has what Rasmussen calls a *foundational layer* that doesn't depend on anything outside itself for its existence. We'll consider the nature of this “foundation” more carefully next.[{10}](#)

Probing the Foundation

As we just noted, there isn't *anything* outside “the blob of everything.” And hence, there isn't anything *outside* the blob that could cause, or explain, its existence.

What are we to make of this? Notice, first, that since the blob includes *everything* that exists, it includes many things that depend on other things for their existence. For example, the blob contains things like weasels, watches, and waffles and each of *these* things depend on *other* things for their existence. Baby weasels depend on mommy and daddy weasels. Watches and waffles depend on watch- and waffle-makers.

But notice: not everything in the blob can be like this. After all, if everything in the blob depended on something else for its existence, then we would have a serious problem—for the “blob of everything” does not depend on anything else for *its own* existence. Attempting to build such a blob using only dependent materials (that is, materials that depend on something outside themselves for their existence) would commit what Rasmussen calls a “construction error.”[{11}](#) One cannot construct an independent, self-sufficient reality (like the “blob of everything”), using only dependent parts. That would

be like trying to construct a black steel pipe using nothing but toothpaste! No matter how much toothpaste you have, you will never construct a black steel pipe with such materials. [{12}](#)

So here's the problem. The "blob of everything" includes many things with a dependent nature (like weasels, watches, and waffles). At the same time, the blob (as a whole) depends on nothing outside

itself for *its* existence. How is this possible? Clearly, the blob must contain some special ingredient that does not depend on anything else for its existence. Rasmussen calls this ingredient the "foundation." [{13}](#) It has an independent, self-sufficient, necessary nature. It's the sort of thing that *must* exist, no matter what. [{14}](#) It must therefore be eternal (i.e. without beginning or end) and provide "an ultimate foundation for everything else." [{15}](#)

Eternal Power

This "foundation" that is self-sufficient doesn't need a cause for its existence. It exists on its own. It's the sort of thing that *must* exist, that cannot *not* exist. And for this reason, the foundation must be eternal. That is, it must have always existed. Finally, it must also be powerful. But why?

Well, consider first that "power exists." Rasmussen observes that there are only two ways of explaining this. The first suggests that power "came into existence from nothing." The second says that power is eternal and has always existed. Which way is more reasonable? [{16}](#)

Well, suppose that power came into existence from nothing. The difficulty here is that something cannot come from nothing without a cause. And if there isn't anything, then there cannot be a cause. Moreover, we must remember that "nothing" is *not* anything. It is the absence of anything. It thus has no

potential to produce anything. It has no power or potential because it *isn't* anything. Something cannot come from nothing, then, because “nothing” has no power or potential to produce anything.[{17}](#)

Thus, Rasmussen claims that reason itself drives us to suggest “a power that exists on its own, by its own nature.” In other words, since power exists, and since it can only come from something powerful, there must be an *eternal power*. That is, there must be a power that has always existed. This power never *became* powerful; it *has always been* powerful. Fortunately, this conclusion agrees with reason, unlike the view that power came from nothing.[{18}](#)

Rasmussen sums it up this way: “The foundational power is eternal.”[{19}](#) Now this is quite astonishing. By thinking very carefully and following the light of reason, we have arrived at a foundation of all reality that is independent, self-sufficient, necessary, and eternally powerful. But we can go even further. By considering some of the things that the foundation has produced, we can learn even more about its nature.

Implications

Let's recap: beginning with the simple (and undeniably true) statement that *something exists*, we have watched Rasmussen carefully construct a bridge of reason that has led (so far) to an independent, self-sufficient, eternally powerful foundation of all reality. But Rasmussen goes still further. For if this foundation is the ultimate source of all other things, then we can learn something about the nature of the foundation by considering some of what it has produced.

For example, it is doubtless true that one of the most important things the foundation has produced is *you*—a human being. But what sort of thing are you? And what might this

tell us about the foundation's nature?

Rasmussen examines four aspects of human beings that reveal some important characteristics of the foundation.^{20} First, human beings have minds. We are not like rocks, papers, or scissors. We are self-conscious beings, aware of our own existence. We can think, feel, make plans, and work to accomplish them. Second, we have bodies. We are not disembodied minds, souls, or spirits. There is a complex physical (and physiological) dimension to our being. Third, we are moral agents. We experience a moral dimension to our existence. We sense that some things are good and that others are evil. We recognize that it is good to be kind to other persons and bad to harm them. Finally, we are rational agents. We can “see” or discern certain logical and mathematical truths. For example, we can “see” that two plus two equals four and that “nothing is both true and false at the same time.”^{21}

If we ultimately depend for our existence on a self-sufficient and eternal foundation, then what might this tell us about that which brought us into being? Although the details will have to wait for the next article, the various characteristics of human beings mentioned above point to “a certain *mind-like* aspect of the foundation.”^{22} Indeed, we might even say that these characteristics reveal a foundation with mental, moral, rational—and even personal attributes!

Our goal for the [next article](#), then, is to consider each of these characteristics in greater detail, showing how each one plausibly leads to a personal foundation of existence.

Notes

1. Joshua L. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God: A Philosopher's Bridge to Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), ix.
2. Todd Buras, review of *How Reason Can Lead to God: A*

Philosopher's Bridge to Faith, by Joshua L. Rasmussen, *Philosophia Christi* 21, no. 2 (2019): 453.

3. Robert Koons, Endorsement, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, frontmatter.

4. J. P. Moreland, Endorsement, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, frontmatter.

5. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 9.

6. Ibid., 8-18.

7. Ibid., 8.

8. Ibid., 9.

9. Ibid., 11-13.

10. Ibid., 19-34.

11. Ibid., 22.

12. This illustration is indebted to others like it offered in Rasmussen's book.

13. Ibid., 19-34.

14. Ibid., 31.

15. Ibid., 34.

16. Ibid., 56-7.

17. William Lane Craig, "Questions About Leibniz's Cosmological Argument," Reasonable Faith, August 10, 2014, accessed May 24, 2020,

www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/questions-about-leibnizs-cosmological-argument/

18. Rasmussen, *How Reason Can Lead to God*, 57.

19. Ibid., 60.

20. Ibid., 75-135.

21. Ibid., 131.

22. Ibid., 75.

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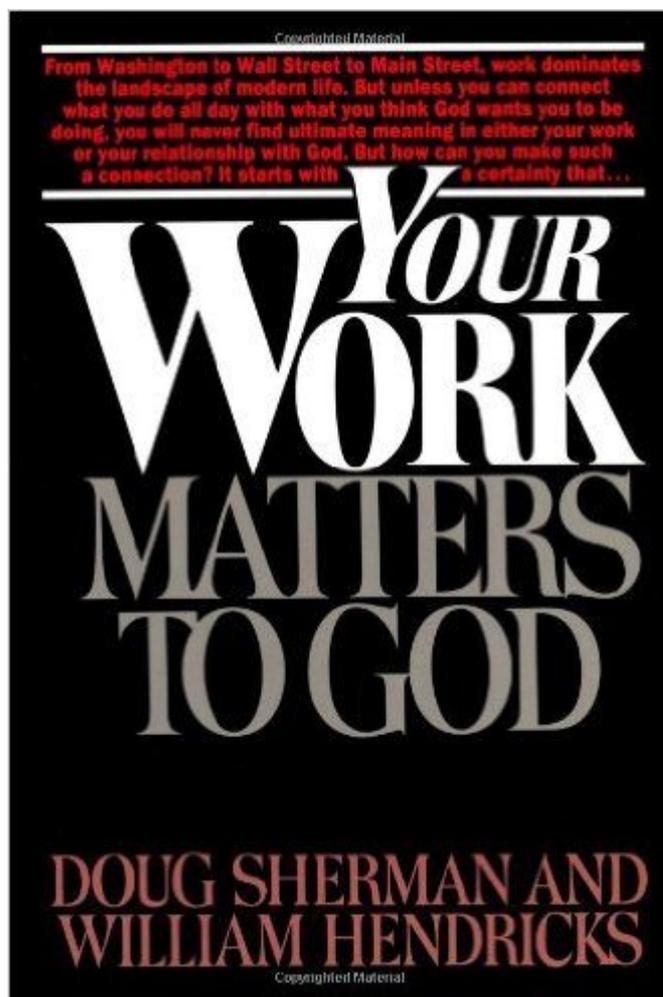
Your Work Matters to God

Sue Bohlin helps us look at work from a biblical perspective. If we apply a Christian worldview to our concept of work, it takes on greater significance within the kingdom of God.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Many Christians hold a decidedly unbiblical view of work. Some view it as a curse, or at least as part of the curse of living in a fallen world. Others make a false distinction between what they perceive as the sacred—serving God—and the secular—everything else. And others make it into an idol, expecting it to provide them with their identity and purpose in life as well as being a source of joy and fulfillment that only God can provide.



In their excellent book *Your Work Matters to God*,^{1}



Doug Sherman and William Hendricks expose the wrong ways of thinking about work, and explain how God invests work with intrinsic value and honor. Rick Warren echoes this idea in his blockbuster *The Purpose Driven Life* when he writes, “Work becomes worship when you dedicate it to God and perform it with an awareness of his presence.”^{2}

First, let's explore some faulty views of work: the secular view, some inappropriate hierarchies that affect how we view work, and work as merely a platform for doing evangelism.

Those who hold a secular view of work believe that life is divided into two disconnected parts. God is in one spiritual dimension and work is in the other *real* dimension, and the two have nothing to do with each other. God stays in His corner of the universe while I go to work and live my life, and these different realms never interact.

One problem with this secular view is that it sets us up for disappointment. If you leave God out of the picture, you'll have to get your sense of importance, fulfillment and reward from someplace else: work. Work is the answer to the question, "Who am I, and why am I important?" That is a very shaky foundation—because what happens if you lose your job? You're suddenly a "nobody," and you are not important because you are not employed.

The secular view of work tends to make an idol of career. Career becomes the number one priority in your life. Your relationship with God takes a back seat, family takes a back seat, even your relationship with other people takes a back seat to work. Everything gets filtered through the question, "What impact will this have on my career?"

The secular view of work leaves God out of the system. This is particularly unacceptable for Christians, because God calls us to make Him the center of our life.^{3} He wants us to have a biblical worldview that weaves Him into every aspect of our lives, including work. He wants to be invited into our work; He wants to be Lord of our work.^{4}

Inappropriate Hierarchies: Soul/Body, Temporal/Eternal

In this article, we're examining some faulty views of work.

One comes from believing that the soul matters more than the body. We can wrongly believe that God only cares about our soul, and our bodies don't really matter. The body is not important, we can think: it is only temporal, and it will fade and die. But if that view were true, then why did God make a physical universe? Why did He put Adam and Eve in the garden to cultivate and keep it? He didn't charge them with, "Go and make disciples of all nations which aren't in existence yet, but they will be as soon as you guys go off and start making babies." No, He said, "Here's the garden, now cultivate it." He gave them a job to do that had nothing to do with evangelism or church work. There is something important about our bodies, and God is honored by work that honors and cares for the body—which, after all, is His good creation.

Another wrong way of thinking is to value the eternal over the temporal so much that we believe *only* eternal things matter. Some people believe that if you work for things that won't last into eternity—jobs like roofing and party planning and advertising—you're wasting your time. This wrong thinking needs to be countered by the truth that God created two sides to reality, the temporal and the eternal. The natural universe God made is very real, just as real as the supernatural universe. Asking which one is real and important is like asking which is real, our nine months in our mother's womb or life after birth? They are both real; they are both necessary. We have to go through one to get to the other.

Those things we do and make on earth DO have value, given the category they were made for: *time*. It's okay for things to have simply temporal value, since God chose for us to live in time before we live in eternity. Our work counts in both time and eternity because God is looking for faithfulness *now*, and the only way to demonstrate faithfulness is within this physical world. Spiritual needs are important, of course, but first physical needs need to be met. Try sharing the gospel with someone who hasn't eaten in three days! Some needs are

temporal, and those needs must be met. So God equips people with abilities to meet the needs of His creation. In meeting the legitimate physical, temporal needs of people, our work serves people, and people have eternal value because God loves us and made us in His image.

The Sacred/Spiritual Dichotomy; Work as a Platform for Evangelism

Another faulty view of work comes from believing that spiritual, sacred things are far more important than physical, secular things. REAL work, people can think, is serving God in full-time Christian service, and then there's everything else running a very poor second. This can induce us to think either too highly of ourselves or too lowly of ourselves. We can think, "Real work is serving God, and then there's what others do" (which sets us up for condescension), or "Real work is serving God, and then there's what I have to do" (which sets us up for false guilt and a sense of "missing it").

It's an improper way to view life as divided between the sacred and the secular. ALL of life relates to God and is sacred, whether we're making a business presentation or changing soiled diapers or leading someone to faith in Christ. It's unwise to think there are sacred things we do and there are secular things we do. It all depends on what's going on in our hearts. You can engage in what looks like holy activity like prayer and Bible study with a dark, self-centered, unforgiving spirit. Remember the Pharisees? And on the other hand, you can work at a job in a very secular atmosphere where the conversation is littered with profanity, the work is slipshod, the politics are wearisome, and yet like Daniel or Joseph in the Old Testament you can keep your own conversation pure and your behavior above reproach. You can bring honor and glory to God in a very worldly environment. God does not want us to do holy things, He wants us to be holy people.

A final faulty view of work sees it only as a platform for doing evangelism. If every interaction doesn't lead to an opportunity to share the gospel, one is a failure. Evangelism should be a priority, true, but not our *only* priority. Life is broader than evangelism. In Ephesians 1, Paul says three times that God made us, not for evangelism, but to live to the praise of His glory.[\[5\]](#) Instead of concentrating only on evangelism, we need to concentrate on living a life that honors God and loves people. That is far more winsome than all the evangelistic strategies in the world. Besides, if work is only a platform for evangelism, it devalues the work itself, and this view of work is too narrow and unfulfilling.

Next we'll examine at how God wants us to look at work. You might be quite surprised!

How God Wants Us to See Work

So far, we have discussed faulty views of work, but how does God want us to see it? Here's a startling thought: we actually work for God Himself! Consider Ephesians 6:5-8, which Paul writes to slaves but which we can apply to employees:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, *as if you were serving the Lord, not men*, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

It's helpful to envision that behind every employer stands the Lord Jesus. He sees everything we do, and He appreciates it and will reward us, regardless of the type of work we do. I learned this lesson one day when I was cleaning the grungy bathtub of a family that wouldn't notice and would never

acknowledge or thank me even if they did. I was getting madder by the minute, throwing myself a pity party, when the Lord broke into my thoughts. He quietly said, "I see you. And I appreciate what you're doing." Whoa! In an instant, that totally changed everything. Suddenly, I was able to do a menial job—and later on, more important ones—as a labor of love and worship for Jesus. I know He sees and appreciates what I do. It forever changed my view of work.

God also wants us to see that work is His gift to us. It is not a result of the Fall. God gave Adam and Eve the job of cultivating the garden and exercising dominion over the world *before* sin entered the world. We were created to work, and for work. Work is God's good gift to us!

Listen to what Solomon wrote:

After looking at the way things are on this earth, here's what I've decided is the best way to live: Take care of yourself, have a good time, and make the most of whatever job you have for as long as God gives you life. And that's about it. That's the human lot. Yes, we should make the most of what God gives, both the bounty and the capacity to enjoy it, accepting what's given and delighting in the work. It's God's gift!{6}

Being happy in our work doesn't depend on the work, it depends on our attitude. To make the most of our job and be happy in our work is a gift God wants to give us!

Why Work is Good

In this article we're talking about how to think about work correctly. One question needs to be asked, though: Is all work equally valid? Well, no. All legitimate work is an extension of God's work of maintaining and providing for His creation. Legitimate work is work that contributes to what God wants done in the world and doesn't contribute to what He doesn't

want done. So non-legitimate work would include jobs that are illegal, such as prostitution, drug dealing, and professional thieves. Then there are jobs that are legal, but still questionable in terms of ethics and morality, such as working in abortion clinics, pornography, and the gambling industry. These jobs are legal, but you have to ask, how are they cooperating with God to benefit His creation?

Work is God's gift to us. It is His provision in a number of ways. In *Your Work Matters to God*, the authors suggest five major reasons why work is valuable:

1. Through work we serve people. Most work is part of a huge network of interconnected jobs, industries, goods and services that work together to meet people's physical needs. Other jobs meet people's aesthetic and spiritual needs as well.

2. Through work we meet our own needs. Work allows us to exercise the gifts and abilities God gives each person, whether paid or unpaid. God expects adults to provide for themselves and not mooch off others. Scripture says, "If one will not work, neither let him eat!"[{7}](#)

3. Through work we meet our family's needs. God expects the heads of households to provide for their families. He says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."[{8}](#)

4. Through work we earn money to give to others. In both the Old and New Testaments, God tells us to be generous in meeting the needs of the poor and those who minister to us spiritually. [{9}](#)

5. Through work we love God. One of God's love languages is obedience. When we work, we are obeying His two great commandments to love Him and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.[{10}](#) We love God by obeying Him from the heart. We love our neighbor as we serve other people through our work.

We bring glory to God by working industriously, demonstrating what He is like, and serving others by cooperating with God to meet their needs. In serving others, we serve God. And that's why our work matters to God.

Notes

1. Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987.
2. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. p. 67.
3. Philippians 1:21
4. Romans 12:1, 2
5. Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14
6. Ecclesiastes 5:18-19, *The Message*.
7. 2 Thess. 3:10
8. 1 Tim. 5:8
9. Leviticus 19:10—Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God. Ephesians 4:28—Let him who steals, steal no longer but rather let him labor performing with his own hands what is good in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. Gal 6:6—The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.
10. Matthew 22:37-39

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Historical Cycles

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of four world-changing cycles: a political/cultural cycle, a generational cycle, a technological cycle, and a financial cycle.

Are there cycles in history? Yes, even though there is a linear trajectory in history, there are generational cycles we can observe. No doubt you have heard the phrase: “Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, weak men create hard times.” Or you may have heard: “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” And you may have heard the phrase “the fourth turning” that predicts a crisis at the end of a four-fold cycle.

We are going to look at four of the most often quoted cycles: a political/cultural cycle, a generational cycle, a technological cycle, and a financial cycle. Today we take for granted democracy, capitalism, and the industrial revolution. These political, economic, and technological realities were not always in our world but came about because of revolutions.



One of the most significant revolutions took place 250 years ago. Andrew Wilson talks about this in his book, *Remaking the World*. He describes 1776 as “a year that witnessed seven transformations taking place—globalization, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the Great Enrichment, the American Revolution, the rise of post-Christianity, and the dawn of Romanticism.”

Some of the events in 1776 we know. That was the year the Declaration of Independence was ratified. It was the year when Adam Smith published the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. It was also the year of James Watt’s invention of the steam engine that spawned the industrial revolution. Both capitalism and the industrial revolution led to a significant increase in life expectancy and the rise of social development.

In this article as we discuss each of these four cycles, we should remember this interesting fact: all these cycles seem to be converging today. The last time these cycles converged in 1776, the world changed.

We are fortunate to live in such a time as this (Esther 4:14). We should be like the sons of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who were “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.”

What does the future hold? Only God knows. As the song goes, “He’s got the whole world in His hands.” We may not know the future, but we can trust in the One who knows the future.

I think we are likely headed for a massive change in the future. But it is difficult to predict what political event or economic spark might inflame our world. Therefore, we should all be in prayer for our leaders and prepare ourselves for possible turmoil ahead.

Political/Cultural Cycle

Let us look at what appears to be an eighty-year political/cultural cycle. (It actually seems to average out to about 84 years). Go back to 1848 and you have Karl Marx publishing the *Communist Manifesto* and other works. The political and social impact of his Marxist perspective swept through Europe, changed the political structure of many countries, and is still an influence today. This idea not only introduced a new way of viewing the world but was also responsible for removing the monarchy from most nation states.

Another important political change happened 84 years later in the 1930s. In Europe, you have the rise of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. In this country, you had the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt who signed into law a significant number of New Deal programs that vastly expanded the scope of government and are influential in our lives today. It is worth remembering that the federal government wasn’t as large as it is today. Roosevelt was responsible for the creation of so many of the alphabet soup of programs and federal agencies. The following decades were the era of big government.

If you add another 84 years, you come to 2016. In Europe, you have the political battle known as Brexit and the beginning of some populist uprisings. In this country, you also had the rise of populism and a reaction to the size and scope of big government. That was best illustrated by the election of Donald Trump.

It was also a time of turmoil. In Europe, we had the farmer protests in the Netherlands and the yellow jacket protests in France. In the U.S., we had BLM protests and Antifa protests.

There is also a longer cycle that describes the rise and fall of empires. General John Glubb notices that most empires last about 250 years. If you apply that to the U.S., you find that we are entering the end of that cycle. One key date is 1776. That not only marks the beginning of the nation (Declaration of Independence) but the promotion of capitalism (Adam Smith and the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*). By the way, if you go back about 250 years before that you come to the Protestant Reformation that began when Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the Wittenberg Door.

We are fortunate to live in such a time as this (Esther 4:14). We should be like the sons of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who were “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.”

What does the future hold? It appears we are likely headed for a massive change in the future.

Generational Cycle

We now turn to looking at a generational cycle.

More than a quarter century ago, William Strauss and Neil Howe wrote their bestselling book, *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy*. In it, they argued that history could be understood as coming in turnings, which have cycles of four. Each cycle spans a length longer than human life, roughly 80 to 100

years. That unit of time was what the ancients called the saeculum. These four turnings of the saeculum comprise the historical rhythm of growth, maturation, entropy, and destruction.

The first turning is a High – an upbeat era of strengthening institutions and weakening individualism. That is when a new civic order develops and the old values decay. The second turning is an Awakening – which is a passionate era of spiritual upheaval. This is when the civic order comes under attack from new values. The third turning is an Unraveling – which is a downcast era of strengthening individualism and weakening institutions. This is when the old civil order decays and new values develop. The fourth turning is a Crisis – which is a decisive era of secular upheaval. The values regime propels the replacement of the old civil order with a new one.

The authors predicted that political, economic, and social upheavals would rattle the United States in and around the 2020s. The 2008 economic crisis and the changes just described from 2016 seemed to support the predictions made in the book.

Last year, Neil Howe wrote *The Fourth Turning Is Here*. The title tells it all. We are in crisis as illustrated by a government that does not seem to function, low public trust in just about any institution, political polarization, moral and legal chaos, and a collapse of families. He reminds us of the Abraham Lincoln quote that “a house divided against itself cannot stand” and that the government “will become all one thing, or all the other.” He also reminds us of other fourth turning crises in America: World War II, the Civil War, and the American Revolution.

We are fortunate to live in such a time as this (Esther 4:14). We should be like the sons of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who were “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.”

What does the future hold? It appears we are likely headed for a massive change in the future.

Technological Cycle

Let's look at a technological cycle.

There appears to be about a fifty-year technological cycle, in which we see important technological revolutions. In the late 18th century, we saw the beginnings of what today we refer to as the industrial revolution. Most people lived on farms. This revolution brought people out of the farms into the cities and factories.

Fifty years later was the age of steam and railways that changed the world significantly. Up until that time, we had manpower and horsepower. Trains that run on steam and steam ships changed the world in significant ways. Now people could move faster and carry heavier loads over a longer distance.

Fifty years after that we had steel and electricity. Steel was important in buildings. Brick buildings could only be a few stories high. Steel allowed designers to create skyscrapers and to build bridges over larger sections of water. Electricity literally lit up the dark night and provided numerous conveniences that we take for granted today.

Fifty years after that we had oil, automobiles, and a revolution in mass production. Automobiles provided people with the ability to go wherever they wanted without having to walk, ride a horse, or catch a train. Advances in mass production enhanced the industrial revolution and made possible the vast array of products available to us today.

By the 1970s, we came into the age of information and telecommunications. This came about with the development of the transistor and then the microchip. Our digital world developed because of these inventions.

Today, we find ourselves in a world of fast computers, [artificial intelligence](#), and [genetic engineering](#). We have social media, but we also have social media censorship. We have creative graphics, but we also have deep fakes and growing questions about [what is real and what is fake](#). We can genetically treat and cure diseases, but we can also [genetically engineer humans](#). How much of this will be driven by politics or economics? It is worth noting this latest technological cycle raises significant questions and also coincides with the political cycles and the generational cycle.

We are fortunate to live in such a time as this (Esther 4:14). We should be like the sons of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who were “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.”

What does the future hold? It appears we are likely headed for a massive change in the future.

Financial Cycle

In this article we have looked at four important historical cycles. Now we conclude by covering a financial cycle. You will notice that some of the financial cycles parallel the technological revolutions.

America moved from an agricultural society to an industrial economy to an information society.

If you look at the wealth cycles of nations, you notice something interesting about which currency was dominant. The financial superpower changes over time, on average about 100 years. Perhaps you have seen a chart that shows these changes:

Portugal – Portuguese Real (15th century)

Spain – Spanish Real (16th century)

Netherlands – Dutch Guilder (17th century)

France – Franc (18th century)

Britain – Pound sterling (19th century)

U.S. – U.S. dollar (20th century)

Where are we today? The U.S. and other countries around the world are experiencing a debt crisis. One significant reason for this is the fact that the dollar is no longer “good as gold.” For 5,000 years, money was gold. But protecting it and transporting it was difficult. Banks and nations held the gold and created paper certificates that represented the value. Sometimes, the amount of paper currency was not always backed by gold.

The greatest problem came in the 20th century. In 1944, the Bretton Woods conference fixed gold at \$35 per ounce. But by 1971, President Nixon closed the gold window and we have seen over the last fifty-plus years that the value of the dollar has continually declined. Also, the possibility of the U.S. dollar remaining the reserve currency in the world is questionable.

At the same time, this country and other countries are facing a significant debt crisis. It is easy to spend more when all you need to do is print more money. That leads to inflation and a devaluation of your currency.

When faced with a debt crisis, you only have a few options. You can default on the debt, which some nations have done. You can tax the citizens, but there isn't enough wealth in any nation to cover the size of those national debts. You could cut spending, but few politicians would ever consider that option. Instead, most countries (including the U.S.) print more money. Unfortunately, that can only last for so long. Just look at Weimar Germany or Zimbabwe or Venezuela.

We are fortunate to live in such a time as this (Esther 4:14). We should be like the sons of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) who were “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.”

What does the future hold? It appears we are likely headed for a massive change in the future.

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Ancient Perspectives on Happiness

After examining several pagan view of happiness from the ancient world, Dr. Michael Gleghorn argues for the view of Christian philosopher Augustine.

The Declaration of Independence says that all men “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights,” including “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”[\[1\]](#) Although we could say a lot about this statement, I want to focus on that very last phrase: the pursuit of happiness. What exactly is happiness? And how should we pursue it in order to have the best chance of attaining it? These questions not only interest us, they also interested some of the greatest thinkers from the far-flung past.

So what *is* happiness? An online dictionary says that happiness “results from the possession . . . of what one considers good.”[\[2\]](#) A good start, but it raises another question, namely, what should we consider *good*? Many things can be described as *good*: a cat, a job, a lover, and a book may all qualify. And each of these things might even make us *happy* . . . at least, for a while. But is there a *good* that offers us genuine and lasting happiness? If so, what is it? Now we’re getting closer to what the ancients were interested in knowing about happiness.



Of course, as you can probably guess, many different answers were proposed. A few thought that happiness could be found in the pleasures of the flesh. But most believed you needed something a bit more . . . *lofty*, shall we say, in order to experience *real* happiness, things like friendship, peace of mind, virtue, and even God. One thing they virtually all agreed on was that a truly good and happy life ought to be lived with a sense of mission or purpose. Hence, the ancients did not think about happiness primarily in terms of just “having a good time.” Instead, they thought there was an important *moral* component to happiness. As Christian theologian Ellen Charry notes, for the ancients, happiness “comes from using oneself consistently, intentionally, and effectively, and hence it is a moral undertaking.”[{3}](#)

The link between morality and happiness has, I fear, become rather under-appreciated in our own day. But important as it is, many (including myself) don’t believe that this can be the *final* word on happiness. So in an effort to find out what is, we’ll spend the rest of this article looking first at some of the most important pagan perspectives on happiness from the ancient world before concluding with a Christian proposal by possibly the greatest theologian in the early church, a man named Augustine.[{4}](#)

Epicureanism

Let’s begin with Epicureanism. Epicurus lived from 341–270 B.C. and is often viewed as the poster boy for a hedonistic lifestyle. A popular gourmet cooking site, epicurious.com, creatively plays off this reputation to celebrate the pleasures of a great meal.[{5}](#) But as we’ll see, Epicurus was not the total “party animal” that people often think.[{6}](#)

Although he rightly regarded physical pleasure as a good thing, and believed that it was natural for us to want it, he personally thought that friendship and mental tranquility were even better. It was these latter sources of happiness, and not

merely the pleasures of the flesh, which Epicurus thought of as the greatest goods. In order to attain them, he even commended a life of virtue. After all, it's the virtuous person, living at peace with his neighbors, who generally has far less cause for fear and worry than someone who's been up to no good. Such a person is thus more likely to experience the true joys of friendship and mental tranquility than his non-virtuous counterpart.[{7}](#)

As you can probably see, there are aspects of Epicureanism that even a Christian can appreciate. But there are problems with this view as well. For example, while Epicurus did not deny either God or the gods, he did teach that they were rather unconcerned about human affairs, and he denied that there would be a final judgment. For him, death was simply the end of existence and you didn't need to worry that God would judge you for your deeds in an afterlife. But these ideas made many people uncomfortable.

For instance, the Roman philosopher Cicero (106-43 B.C.) reacted strongly against Epicureanism in his book *The Nature of the Gods*. And Lactantius, an early Christian writer (A.D. 250-325), believed that only the fear of God "guards the mutual society of men."[{8}](#) In his view, if people think they aren't accountable to God, society will likely be in trouble. Hence, many thinkers worried that Epicureanism might lead to an amoral—or even *immoral*—pursuit of pleasure as the highest good of life. And unfortunately, this "can just as easily lead to debauchery and . . . selfishness as it can to the simple, honest life style of Epicurus."[{9}](#)

So while the Epicurean view of happiness has some things in its favor, there are several reasons for rejecting it.

Stoicism

Stoicism was another important school of thought that addressed the issue of human happiness. In the ancient world,

it “was the single most successful and longest-lasting movement in Greco-Roman philosophy.”[{10}](#) The Stoics’ manly, morally tough philosophy of life had broad appeal in the ancient world. It attracted slaves like Epictetus (ca. A.D. 55-ca. 135) as well as the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121-180). Even many of the early church fathers admired the Stoic emphasis on moral virtue and integrity.[{11}](#)

So what did the Stoics think about human happiness? According to Ellen Charry, the Stoics viewed “the goal of life” as human flourishing. This was understood, however, not in terms of having a long life or being financially successful. Rather, it was viewed “as maintaining one’s dignity and grace whatever may happen.”[{12}](#) The Stoics understood that things don’t always work out as we want. Life throws us many curve balls and, if we’re not prepared, we’re bound to be disappointed.

Their solution? In a statement reminiscent of the Buddha’s teaching, the Stoic Epictetus declared, “Demand not that events happen as you wish, but wish them to happen as they do happen, and you will get on well.”[{13}](#) We often don’t have any control over what goes on around us. But we can control how we react to it. By knowing the good and morally virtuous thing to do, and by consistently choosing to do this, one attains the highest happiness of which human beings are capable; namely, “the enjoyment of self that comes from the conviction that one is living a principled life of the highest integrity.”[{14}](#) This, in a nutshell, is the Stoic conception of human happiness.

But there are some problems with this view. Although Christians will readily cheer the Stoic commitment to a life of moral virtue, they’ll nonetheless deny that such a life is ever really possible apart from the grace of God. As the Christian theologian Augustine observed, Stoicism fails to adequately address the problem of human sinfulness. Moreover, he thought, it holds out the false hope that one can achieve happiness through self-effort. But as Augustine wisely saw,

only God can make us truly happy. Hence, while there's much to admire about Stoicism, as a philosophy of human happiness it must ultimately disappoint.[{15}](#)

Neo-Platonism

Having now surveyed Epicureanism and Stoicism, and found each of them wanting, we must next turn to Neo-Platonism to see if it fares any better.

Probably the most important Neo-Platonist philosopher was a man named Plotinus, who lived in the third century A.D. Plotinus believed that in the beginning was the One, "the supreme transcendent principle" and the "ground of all being."[{16}](#) Everything which now exists ultimately originated from the One through a series of emanations. Since everything proceeds from the One *not* by a process of creation, but rather by a process of emanation, "Creator and creation . . . are not sharply distinguished in Plotinus's account."[{17}](#)

Although this is certainly different from the biblical view, in which there *is* a clear distinction between Creator and creation, it would probably not be fair to simply call Plotinus a pantheist—that is, someone who believes that "all" of reality is "Divine." According to one scholar, Plotinus tried "to steer a middle course" between pure pantheism (on the one hand) and creation by God (on the other).[{18}](#) But since everything that exists emanates or proceeds from the One, Plotinus's view is certainly *close* to pantheism. And it is thus quite different from the biblical doctrine of creation.

But how is this relevant to Plotinus's perspective on the nature of human happiness? According to Plotinus, since everything (including mankind) emanates out of the One, human beings can only truly find happiness by realizing their "oneness" with the One. In Plotinus's view, "Happiness resides in a person's realization that she is one with divinity."[{19}](#)

According to Plotinus, then, realizing one's "oneness" with the One is the key to human happiness.

Are there any problems with this view? Although there's much to admire about Neo-Platonism, and while it was quite influential in the early church, it was never entirely accepted, and that for several reasons. From a Christian perspective, Neo-Platonism ultimately has a defective view of God, creation, human nature, the meaning of salvation, and what happens to a person after death. In other words, while the system is very religious, it's *not* Christianity. And thus, while we can agree with Plotinus that happiness can only be found in God, we must nonetheless reject his system on the grounds that he's not pointing us to the one *true* God.

Augustinianism

Having previously surveyed some of the most important perspectives on happiness from the ancient world, we'll now bring our discussion to a close by briefly considering the thought of Augustine, one of the greatest theologians of the early church. Augustine lived from A.D. 354 to 430 and was familiar with the various perspectives on happiness which we've already examined.

Like the Epicureans, he believed that our happiness is at least tangentially related to our physical well-being. Like the Stoics, he believed that a life of integrity and moral virtue was important for human happiness. And like the Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus, Augustine thought that true human happiness could only be found in God.

Nevertheless, Augustine views each of these perspectives as ultimately inadequate for all who long to experience *lasting* human happiness (and Augustine thinks that's pretty much all of us). After all, neither physical well-being nor a virtuous life can grant us lasting happiness if our existence ends at death. And while he agrees with Plotinus that happiness can

only be found in God, Augustine (like all Christians) is convinced that Plotinus ultimately has a defective view of God.[{20}](#)

So where is true and lasting happiness to be found? Ellen Charry sums up Augustine's view quite nicely when she writes, "Happiness is knowing, loving, and enjoying God securely."[{21}](#) In Augustine's view, happiness is a condition in which one's desires are realized. Happy is he who has what" he wants," he writes in his little book on happiness.[{22}](#) But he also believed that what we all really want is the *everlasting* possession of the *greatest* good that can be had. That is, we want the best that there is—and we want it forever!

But since the greatest good can only be God, the source and foundation of every other good there is (or ever will be), it seems that what we ultimately want, whether we realize it or not, is God! And if we not only want the best that there is, but want it forever, it seems that we must ultimately want the very thing God freely offers us in Christ, namely, everlasting life in the presence of God. The psalmist urges us to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). And those who do are promised joy in His presence and "eternal pleasures" at His right hand (Psalm 16:11).

This, then, is Augustine's view on human happiness. In my opinion, it's far and away the best perspective that we've examined in this article, and I hope you'll think so, too.

Notes

1. Cited from the text of the Declaration of Independence at www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html (accessed August 26, 2011).
2. Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, inc., s.v. "happiness," dictionary.reference.com/browse/happiness (accessed August 26, 2011).

3. Ellen T. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 3-4.
4. Ellen Charry surveys the views of each of these persons and perspectives in the first two chapters of her book *God and the Art of Happiness*, 3-62.
5. For more, check out www.epicurious.com
6. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 70.
7. This paragraph is indebted to the discussion of Epicurus in Solomon and Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy*, 70-71.
8. Lactantius, "A Treatise on the Anger of God," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 269; cited in Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, 8.
9. Stanley R. Obitts, "Epicureanism," in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 358.
10. Solomon and Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy*, 71.
11. Gary T. Burke, "Stoics, Stoicism," in Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1056.
12. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, 9.
13. The *Enchiridion*, VIII; cited in Solomon and Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy*, 71.
14. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, 10.
15. This paragraph is indebted to Ellen Charry's discussion of Augustine's critique of Stoicism in *God and the Art of Happiness*, 14-15.
16. Everett Ferguson, "Neoplatonism," in Elwell, ed.,

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 756.

17. Solomon and Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy*, 122.

18. Frederick Copleston, Greece and Rome, vol. 1 of *A History of Philosophy* (Garden City: Image Books, 1985), 467.

19. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, 19.

20. This paragraph and the one that precedes it are generally indebted to Charry's discussion in *God and the Art of Happiness*, 3-62.

21. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, 29.

22. De beata vita 10; cited in John Bussanich, "Happiness, Eudaimonism," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 413.

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Four Killer Questions: Power Tools for Great Question-Asking

Sue Bohlin provides helpful information for use in helping sharpen the question-asking skills of fellow believers as well as in evangelism. These "understanding questions" help Christians sharpen their biblical worldview and help unbelievers delve into the inconsistencies of their own worldview.

Dr. Jeff Myers of Bryan College and Summit Ministries shares our passion for helping others develop a biblical worldview. One of the tools he offers in developing critical thinking skills is how to use the right question at the right time.



He suggests four “killer questions” to help anyone think critically.^{1} The first question is, *What do you mean by that?* In other words, define your terms. The second question is, *Where do you get your information?* The third is, *How do you know that’s true?*, and the fourth killer question is, *What if you’re wrong?*

Dr. Myers tells this story:

“A friend took a group of third graders to the Denver Museum of Natural History.

“Before he took them inside, he knelt down on their level and said, ‘Kids, if anybody in this museum tells you anything, I want you to ask them, *how do you know that’s true?*’ Giving this question to a third grader is the intellectual equivalent of giving them a surface-to-air missile. These kids walked into the museum; all they knew was, Ask: *How do you know that’s true?*”

“A paleontologist was going to show them how to find a fossil. Apparently they had intentionally buried a fossil down in the soil sample and she said, ‘We’re going to find it.’ Very clever, right? No, not with this crowd. ‘Cause they started asking questions like, ‘Well, how do you know there’s a fossil down in there?’ ‘Well, because we just know there’s a fossil down there.’ ‘Why do you want to find it?’ ‘Well, because we want to study it.’ ‘Why do you want to study it?’ ‘We want to find out how old it is.’ Well, how old do you think it is?’ ‘About 60 million years old.’”

“‘Lady, how do you know that is true?’”

“She patronized them. She said, ‘Well, you see, I’m a scientist, I study these things, I just know that.’ They said, ‘Well, how do you know that’s true?’ Anytime she said anything at all they just asked, ‘How do you know that’s true?’ What happened next proves that truth is stranger than fiction. She threw down her tools, glared at these children, and said, ‘Look, children, *I don’t know, OK? I just work here!*’”[\[2\]](#)

Question #1: What do you mean by that?

The first question is, *What do you mean by that?* You want to get the other person to define his terms and explain what he is saying. If you don’t make sure you understand what the other person means, you could end up having a conversation using the same words but meaning very different things.

When I was a new believer, I was approached on the street by some people collecting money for a ministry to young people. I asked, naively, “Do you teach about Jesus?” They said, rather tentatively, “Yesss. . . .” I gave them some money and asked for their literature (which was in the reverse order of what I should have done). Only later did I learn that they did indeed teach about Jesus—that He was the brother of Satan! I wish I had had this first killer question back then. I would have asked, “What do you teach about Jesus? Who is He to you?”

Get the other person’s definition. Let’s say you’re talking to a neighbor who says, “I don’t believe there is a God.” Don’t quarrel with him: “Oh yes there is!” “No, there’s not.” Second Timothy 2:24-25 says not to quarrel with anyone. Just start asking questions instead. “What do you mean by ‘God’? What’s your understanding of this God who isn’t there?” Let him define that which does not exist! You may well find out that the god he rejects is a mean, cold, abusive god who looks a lot like his father. In that case, you can assure him that you don’t believe in that god either. The true God is altogether different. If it were me, at this point I wouldn’t pursue the existence of God argument, but rather try to understand where

the other person is coming from, showing the compassion and grace of God to someone bearing painful scars on his soul.

Let's say someone says she is for a woman's right to choose abortion. You can ask, "What do you mean by 'woman'? Only adult women? What if the baby is a girl, what about her right to choose? What do you mean by 'right'? Where does that right come from?" Do you see how asking *What do you mean by that?* can expose problems in the other person's perspective?

Question #2: Where do you get your information?

The question *Where do you get your information?* is particularly important in today's culture, where we drown in information from a huge array of sources. Information is being pumped at us from TV, radio, music, Websites, email, blogs, billboards, movies, and conversations with people who have no truth filters in place at all. Consider the kind of responses you could get to the question, *Where do you get your information?*

"I heard it somewhere." Well, how's that for reliable? Follow with another killer question, *How do you know it's true?*

"Everybody says so." That may be so, but is it true? If you say something loud enough, often enough, and long enough, people will believe it's true even if it isn't. For example, "everybody says" people are born gay. Doesn't everybody know that by now? That's what we hear, every day, but where is the science to back up that assertion? Turns out, there is none. Not a shred of proof that there is a gay gene.

Someone else may say, "I read it somewhere." So ask, in a legitimate newspaper or magazine? Or in a tabloid? Elvis is not alive, and you can't lose twenty-five pounds in a week. You might have read it somewhere, but there is a word for that kind of writing: *fiction*.

Did you see it on the internet? That could be a single individual with great graphics abilities pumping out his own totally made-up stuff. Or it could be a trustworthy, legitimate website like Probe.org.

Did you see it on TV? Who said it, and how trustworthy is the source? Was it fact, or opinion? Be aware of the worldview agenda behind the major media outlets. Former CBS reporter Bernard Goldberg exposed the leftist leanings of the media in his book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*. Most of what you see on TV is what the Bible calls “the world,” and we are to be discerning and skeptical of the values and information it pumps out.

Don't be fooled by someone sounding confident and self-assured. Many people feel confident without any basis for feeling that way. Ask, *Where do you get your information?* It's a great killer question.

Question #3: How do you know that's true?

The third killer question is, *How do you know that's true?* This is probably the most powerful question of them all. It puts the burden of proof on the other person.

Most people aren't aware of what they assume is true; there's simply no other way to see the world. They often believe what they believe without asking if it's true, if it aligns with reality. If you respectfully ask killer questions like *How do you know that's true?*, all of a sudden it can begin to occur to folks that what they believe, they believe by faith. But where is their faith placed?

Sometimes, the kindest thing we can do for people is gently shake up their presuppositions and invite them to think.

The reigning philosophy in science today is materialism, the insistence that the physical universe is all that exists. Something is only real if it can be measured and quantified.

We need to ask, *How do you know* there is nothing outside the matter-space-time-energy continuum? *How do you know* that the instruments of physical measurement are the only ones that matter? *How do you know* there isn't something non-physical, which cannot be measured with physical measuring tools? If all you have is a ruler, how do you measure weight? (And if all you have is a ruler, and someone wants to talk about weight, it would be easy to deny there is such a thing as weight, only height and length, a lot like the materialists' insistence that since we can't measure the supernatural, it doesn't exist.)

At the heart of the debate over stem cell research is the question of the personhood of a human embryo. Those who insist that it's not life until implantation need to be asked, *How do you know that's true?* It's genetically identical to the embryo ten minutes before implantation. How do you know those are only a clump of cells and not a human being?

Postmodern thought says that no one can know truth. This philosophy has permeated just about every college campus. To the professor who asserts, "No one can know truth," a student should ask, *How do you know that's true?* If that sounds slightly crazy to you, good! A teacher who says there is no truth, or that if there is, no one can know it, says it because he or she believes it to be true, or they wouldn't be saying it!

We get hostile email at Probe informing us of how stupid and biased we are for believing the Bible, since it has been mistranslated and changed over the centuries and it was written by man anyway. When I ask, "How do you know this is true?", I don't get answers back. Putting the burden of proof on the other person is quite legitimate. People are often just repeating what they have heard from others. But we have to be ready to offer a defense for the hope that is in us as well. [3](#) Of course, when we point to the Bible as our source of information, it's appropriate to ask the killer question,

“How do you know that’s true?” Fortunately, there is a huge amount of evidence that today’s Bible is virtually the same as the original manuscripts. And there is strong evidence for its supernatural origins because of things like fulfilled prophecy. Go to the “Reasons to Believe” section of Probe.org for a number of articles on why we can trust that the Bible is really God’s word.

There are a lot of mistaken, deceived people who believe in reincarnation and insist they remember their past lives. Shirley MacLaine claims to have been a Japanese Geisha, a suicide in Atlantis, an orphan raised by elephants, and the seducer of Charlemagne.^{4} Here’s where this killer question comes in. If you lose your life memories when you die, *how do you know* your past lives are real? When you’re born into a new body and your slate is wiped clean, *how do you know* it’s you?

So many people have embraced a pragmatic, expedient standard of, “Hey, it works for me.” “It works for me to cheat on my taxes, as long as I don’t get caught.” “It works for me to spend hours on porn sites late at night since my wife doesn’t know how to check the computer’s history.” “It works for me to keep God in his corner of the universe while I do my own thing; I’ll get religious later in life.” Well, *how do you know* it works? You haven’t seen the whole, big picture. You can’t know the future, and you can’t know how tomorrow’s consequences will be reaped from today’s choices.

Let me add a caveat here. The underlying question behind *How do you know that’s true?* is really, “Why should I believe you?” It can be quite disconcerting to be challenged this way, so be sure to ask with a friendly face and without an edge in your voice.

Question #4: What if you’re wrong?

One benefit of this question is that it helps us not to “sweat the small stuff.” There are a lot of issues where it just

doesn't matter a whole lot if we're wrong. If you're agonizing over a restaurant menu, trying to figure out the best entree, what if you're wrong? It doesn't matter. You can probably come back another time. If you can't, because you're traveling and you'll never have another chance, is it going to wreck your life? Absolutely not.

Many of our youth (and, sadly, adults as well) believe that having sex is just part of being social. Many of them believe that sex qualifies as recreation, much like going to an amusement park. They need to be challenged: *What if you're wrong?* Besides the high probability of contracting a number of sexually transmitted diseases, there is the ongoing heartache of the discovery that "casual" sex isn't, because of its lasting impact on the heart.

The ultimate question where this matters is, *What do you believe about God?* What do you do with Jesus' statement "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me"?^{5} What if you believe there is no God, or that you can live however you want and God will let you into heaven because you're not a mass murderer? We need to ask, *What if you're wrong?* You will be separated from God forever!

It's only fair for Christ-followers to ask that of ourselves. What if we're wrong? What if we're actually living an illusion that there is a God and a purpose to life? I would say, "You know what? I still lived a great life, full of peace and purpose and fulfillment. Ultimately, if there were no God, it wouldn't matter—nothing would matter at all!—but I still loved my life. Either way, if I'm right or I'm wrong, I win."

These four killer questions are powerful to spark meaningful conversation and encourage yourself, and others, to think critically. Use them wisely, be prepared for some interesting conversations . . . and have fun!

Notes

1. Our fellow worldview apologist Bill Jack of Worldview Academy (www.worldview.org) has also popularized these “killer questions,” but they go back all the way to Socrates.
2. “Created Male and Female: Biblical Light for a Sexually Darkened World” conference sponsored by the International Council for Gender Studies, October 10-12, 2003.
3. 1 Peter 3:15.
4. www.fortunecity.com/emachines/e11/86/duncan2.html
5. John 14:6.

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