

# The Case for Christ – Reasons to Believe in the Reality of Christ

*Dr. Ray Bohlin summarizes the evidence found by Lee Strobel when researching the question: Is Jesus Christ really who the Bible says He is? He shows that we have strong evidence on every front that backs up our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This important apologetic argument helps us understand the enduring value of Christianity.*

## Sometimes the Evidence Doesn't Stack Up

Skeptics around the world claim that Jesus either never said He was God or He never exemplified the activities and mindset of God. Either way they rather triumphantly proclaim that Jesus was just a man. Some will go so far as to suggest that He was a very moral and special man, but a man nonetheless. Well, Lee Strobel was just such a skeptic. For Strobel, there was far too much evidence against the idea of God, let alone the possibility that God became a man. God was just mythology, superstition, or wishful thinking.

As a graduate of Yale Law School, an investigative reporter, and eventual legal affairs editor for the *Chicago Tribune*, Strobel was familiar with the weighing of evidence. He was familiar with plenty of university professors who knew Jesus as an iconoclastic Jew, a revolutionary, or a sage, but not God. He had read just enough philosophy and history to support his skepticism.

As Strobel himself says,

As far as I was concerned, the case was closed. There was enough proof for me to rest easy with the conclusion that the divinity of Jesus was nothing more than the fanciful

invention of superstitious people. Or so I thought.[\[1\]](#)

That last hesitation came as a result of his wife's conversion. After the predictable rolling of the eyes and fears of his wife being the victim of a bait and switch scam, he noticed some very positive changes he found attractive and intriguing. The reporter in him eventually wanted to get to the bottom of this and he launched his own personal investigation. Setting aside as best he could his own personal interest and prejudices, he began reading and studying, interviewing experts, examining archaeology and the Bible.

Over time the evidence began to point to the previously unthinkable. Strobel's book *The Case for Christ* is a revisiting of his earlier quest. He interviews a host of experts along three lines of evidence. In the first section Strobel investigates what he calls the record. What did the eyewitnesses say they saw and heard? Can they be trusted? Can the gospel accounts be trusted? What about evidence from outside the Bible? Does archaeology help or hurt the case for Christ? Strobel puts tough questions to his experts and their answers will both surprise and exhilarate.

In the third section of the book, Strobel investigates the resurrection. He examines the medical evidence, explores the implications of the empty tomb, the reliability of the appearances after the resurrection, and the wide-ranging circumstantial evidence.

However, here we'll focus on the middle section of the book, the analysis of Jesus Himself. Did Jesus really think He was God? Was He crazy? Did He act like He was God? And did He truly match the picture painted in the Old Testament of the Messiah?

## **Was Jesus Really Convinced that He Was**

## the Son of God?

The psychological profiler is a new weapon in the arsenal of criminal investigators. They understand that behavior reflects personality. These highly trained professionals examine the actions and words of criminals and from these clues construct a psychological and sometimes historical profile of the likely perpetrator.

These same skills can be applied to our question of whether Jesus actually thought He was God. We can learn a great deal about what Jesus thought of Himself, not just from what He said, but what He did and how He did it.

Ben Witherington was educated at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M. Div.) and the University of Durham in England (Th. D.). He has taught at several universities and seminaries and authored numerous books and articles about the person of Jesus.

Strobel began his interview by stating that Jesus wasn't very forthcoming about His identity in public, even mysterious. He didn't come right out and say He was the Son of God or the Messiah. Couldn't it be that Jesus simply didn't see Himself that way?

Witherington points out that Jesus needed to operate in the context of His day. To boldly state that He was God would have at first confused and then maddened the Jews of His day. Blasphemy was not treated lightly. Therefore He was very careful, especially at first, of what He said publicly.

There are other clues to Jesus' self-identity as God. He chose twelve disciples, as God chose the twelve nations of Israel. He called John the Baptist the greatest man on earth; yet He went on to do even greater things in His miracles. He told the Pharisees, in contradiction to much of the Old Testament law, that what defiled a man was what came out of his mouth, not

what he put in it. "We have to ask, what kind of person thinks he has the authority to set aside the divinely inspired Jewish Scriptures and supplant them with his own teaching." [\[2\]](#) Even the Romans labeled Him King of the Jews. Either Jesus actually said that or someone thought He did.

Since Jesus' followers called Him Rabboni or Rabbi, it seems they just thought of Him as a teacher and nothing more. But Witherington reminds us that Jesus actually taught in a radical new way. In Judaism, the authority of two or more witnesses was required for the proclamation of truth. But Jesus frequently said, "Amen I say to you," or in modern English, "I swear in advance to the truthfulness of what I am about to say." Jesus attested to the truth of what He was saying on His own authority. This was truly revolutionary.

The evidence that Jesus believed that He stood in the very place of God is absolutely convincing. Maybe He was just crazy. We'll explore that question next.

## **Was Jesus Crazy When He Claimed to be the Son of God?**

There's considerable doubt in the general public about the usefulness of psychological testimony in the courtroom. It seems that you can find some psychologist to testify to just about anything concerning someone's state of mind at the time a crime was committed. But while abuses can occur, most people recognize that a trained and experienced psychologist can offer helpful insights into a person's state of mind while examining his words and actions.

In our investigation of Jesus, if He really believed He was God, can we determine if He was crazy or insane? You can visit just about any mental health facility and be introduced to people who think they are Julius Caesar or Napoleon or even Jesus Christ. Could Jesus have been deluded?

Not so, according to Gary Collins, a psychologist with a doctorate in clinical psychology from Purdue and the author of numerous books and articles in popular magazines and professional journals. Disturbed individuals often show signs of depression or anxiety or explosive anger. But Jesus never displays inappropriate emotions.

He does get angry, but this is clearly appropriate—in the temple, for instance, when He saw the misuse of the temple courtyard and that the moneychangers were taking advantage of the poor. He didn't just get ticked off because someone was annoying Him. In fact, Jesus seems at His most composed when being challenged. In a beautiful passage, Collins describes Jesus as he would an old friend:

He was loving but didn't let his compassion immobilize him; he didn't have a bloated ego, even though he was often surrounded by adoring crowds; he maintained balance despite an often demanding lifestyle; he always knew what he was doing and where he was going; he cared deeply about people, including women and children, who weren't seen as being important back then; he was able to accept people while not merely winking at their sin; he responded to individuals based on where they were at and what they uniquely needed. All in all I just don't see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness.[\[3\]](#)

OK, so maybe Jesus wasn't mentally disturbed, but maybe He used psychological tricks to perform His miracles. Many illnesses are psychosomatic, so maybe His healings were just by the power of suggestion. Collins readily admits that maybe some of Jesus' miracles were of this very type, but they were still healed. And some of His miracles just can't fit this description. Jesus healed leprosy and people blind since birth, both of which would be difficult to pull off as a psychological trick. His miracles over nature also can't be explained psychologically, and raising Lazarus from the dead after being in the tomb for a few days is not the stuff of

trickery. No, Jesus wasn't crazy.

## **Did Jesus Fulfill the Attributes of God?**

Modern forensics utilizes artists who are able to sketch the appearance of a criminal based on the recollections of the victims. This is an important tool to be able to alert the public as to the appearance of a usually violent offender. In Lee Strobel's investigation of the evidence for Jesus, he uses the Old Testament as a sketch of what God is supposed to be like. If Jesus claims to be God, then what we see of Him in the Gospels should mirror the picture of God in the Old Testament.

For this purpose, Strobel interviewed Dr. D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Carson can read a dozen languages and has authored or edited over forty books about Jesus and the New Testament.

At the start of the interview, Strobel asks Carson, "What did Jesus say or do that convinces you that Jesus is God?" The answer was a little surprising. Jesus forgave sins.

We all see ourselves as having the power and authority to forgive someone who has wronged us. Jesus forgave people for things they did that didn't involve Jesus at all. This was startling for that time and even today. Only God can truly forgive sins, and Jesus specifically does so on a number of occasions.[{4}](#)

In addition, Jesus considered himself to be without sin. Historically, we consider people to be holy who are fully conscious of their own failures and are fighting them honestly in the power of the Holy Spirit. But Jesus gave no such impression. In that wonderful chapter, John 8, Jesus asks if anyone can convict Him of sin (John 8:46). The question itself is startling, but no one answers. Sinlessness is another

attribute of deity.

This chapter is a wonderful interview with Carson, covering other questions, such as: how could Jesus be God and actually be born; or say that the Father was greater than He; or not speak out strongly against the slavery of the Jewish and Roman culture; or believe in and send people to Hell? I'll leave you to explore those fascinating questions on your own in the book.

Strobel concludes that the Bible declares several attributes for God and applies them to Jesus. John 16:30 records one of the disciples saying, "Now we can see that you know all things." Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, "Surely I am with you even unto the end of the age." And in Matthew 18:20 He says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them." All authority was given Him (Matthew 28:18) and Hebrews tells us that He is the same yesterday and today. So Jesus is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and immutable. In John 14:7, Jesus says, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well."

## **Did Jesus—and Jesus Alone—Match the Identity of the Messiah?**

So far in Strobel's interviews with scholars we have affirmed that Jesus did claim to be God, He wasn't insane or emotionally disturbed, and He did things that only God would do. Now we want to review Strobel's interview with Louis Lapidès, a Jewish believer as to whether Jesus actually fit the Old Testament picture of what the Messiah would be like.

One of the important pieces of evidence that convinced Lapidès that Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah was the fulfillment of prophecy. There are over forty prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled every one. Some say this is just coincidence. But, the odds of just one person fulfilling even five of these prophecies is less than one

chance in one hundred million billion—a number millions of times greater than the number of all people who have ever lived on earth.{5}

But maybe this isn't all it seems. Objections to the correlation of Jesus' life to the prophecies of the Messiah fall into four categories. The first is the coincidence argument, which we just dispelled. Perhaps the most frequently heard argument is that the gospel writers fabricated the details to make it appear that Jesus was the Messiah. But the gospels were written close enough in time to the actual events that, if false, critics could have exposed the details. Certainly this is true of those in the Jewish community who had every reason to squash this new religion before it got started.

Third, there is the suggestion that Jesus intentionally fulfilled these many prophecies so as to make Himself appear as the Messiah. That's conceivable for some of the prophecies, such as Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, but for others it's impossible. How could Jesus arrange for his ancestry, or place of birth, or the method of execution, or that soldiers would gamble for his clothing? The list goes on.

Fourth, perhaps Christians have just ripped these so-called prophecies out of context and have misinterpreted them. When asked, Lapidés sighed and replied:

You know, I go through books that people write to try to tear down what we believe. That's not fun to do, but I spend the time to look at each objection individually and then to research the context and the wording in the original language. And every single time, the prophecies have stood up and shown themselves to be true.{6}

What I found most intriguing about the interviews was the combination of academic integrity on the part of these scholars alongside a very evident love for the One of whom



they were speaking. For these scholars, finding the historical Jesus was not just an academic exercise, but also a life-changing personal encounter with Jesus. Perhaps it can be for you too.

## Notes

1. Lee Strobel, 1998, *The Case for Christ*, Grand Rapids Michigan/Zondervan Publishing House, p. 13.
2. Ben Witherington, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 135.
3. Gary Collins, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 147.
4. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 157-158.
5. Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, p. 183.
6. Louis Lapidès, quoted in *The Case for Christ*, p. 185.

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# The Case for a Creator

It has been the popular belief for decades that science and Christianity are light years apart. However, as our knowledge of cosmology, astronomy, physics, biochemistry, and DNA has continued to grow, this supposed gap has all but disappeared. Lee Strobel, award-winning journalist and former atheist, explores these and many other compelling evidences in his latest book, *The Case for a Creator*. In this article we will discuss just a handful of these evidences, as presented in his book, and find out how science itself is steadily nailing the lid on atheisms coffin.[\[1\]](#) Lets begin with the argument from cosmology.

## Cosmology

Cosmology is the study of the origin of the universe. In

investigating this field of study, Lee Strobel interviews philosopher and theologian, Dr. William Lane Craig. Craig describes in great detail what he calls “one of the most plausible arguments for God’s existence, the Kalam cosmological argument.[{2}](#) This argument has three simple steps: Whatever begins to exist has a cause. The universe began to exist. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Craig then explains that when he first began to defend the Kalam argument he anticipated that the first step of the argument, whatever begins to exist has a cause, would be almost universally accepted. It was the second point, the universe began to exist, which he believed would be more controversial. However, so much evidence has accumulated, Craig explained, that atheists are finding it difficult to deny that the universe had a beginning. So they’ve begun to attack the first premise instead.[{3}](#)

One such attack was presented in the April 2002 issue of *Discover* magazine. In an article entitled Guth’s Grand Guess, the author describes how quantum theory allows for things a dog, a house, a planet to be materialized out of a quantum vacuum. One professor is quoted as saying, Our universe is simply one of those things which happens from time to time.[{4}](#) Could such an audacious claim be valid?

Craig debunks this claim by making two very important points. First, These subatomic particles the article talks about are called virtual particles. They are theoretical entities and it’s not even clear that they actually exist as opposed to being merely theoretical constructs.[{5}](#) Secondly, however, these particles, if they are real, do not come out of nothing. The quantum vacuum is not what most people envision when they think of a vacuum that is, absolutely nothing. On the contrary, it’s a sea of fluctuating energy. This begs the question, So where does this energy come from? It must have a cause. So even quantum theory fails to explain the origin of the universe without a Creator. Rather, as Craig explains, the

first cause of the universe is the transcendent personal Creator<sup>[6]</sup> of the Bible which states that In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

## Anthropic Principle

What is called the *anthropic principle* essentially states that all seemingly arbitrary and unrelated constants in physics have one strange thing in common these are precisely the values you need if you want to have a universe capable of producing life.<sup>[7]</sup> To explore the particulars of this, Strobel interviews Robin Collins, who has doctorates in both physics and philosophy.

Collins, who has written several books on this subject, is asked to describe one of his favorite examples. He proceeds to illustrate the fine-tuned properties of gravity. He does so by comparing the range of possible gravitational force strengths with an old-fashioned linear radio dial that spans the entire width of the known universe. He says,

*Imagine that you want to move the dial from where its currently set. Even if you were to move it by only one inch, the impact on life in the universe would be catastrophic. . . .*

*That small adjustment of the dial would increase gravity by a billion-fold. . . .*

*Animals anywhere near the size of human beings would be crushed. . . . As astrophysicist Martin Rees said, In an imaginary strong gravity world, even insects would need thick legs to support them, and no animals could get much larger. In fact, a planet with a gravitational pull of a thousand times that of the Earth would have a diameter of only forty feet, which wouldnt be enough to sustain an ecosystem. . . .*

*As you can see, compared to the total range of force*

*strengths in nature, gravity has an incomprehensibly narrow range of life to exist.*[{8}](#)

Collins goes on to discuss several other constants which show a remarkable degree of fine-tuning such as the mass difference between neutrons and protons, electromagnetic forces, strong nuclear forces, and the cosmological constant. In fact, one expert has said that there are more than thirty separate physical or cosmological parameters that require precise calibration in order to produce a life-sustaining universe.[{9}](#)

It is this amazing degree of fine-tuning within physics which Collins believes is by far the most persuasive current argument of the existence of God.[{10}](#) The deeper we dig, Collins concludes, we see that God is more subtle and more ingenious and more creative than we ever thought possible. And I think that's the way God created the universe for us to be full of surprises."[{11}](#)

## **Astronomy**

It had been said for years that there's nothing unusual about Earth. It's an average, unassuming rock that's spinning mindlessly around an unremarkable star in a run-of-the-mill galaxy a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark, as the late Carl Sagan put it.[{12}](#) However, this is no longer thought to be the case. Even secular scientists are talking about the astounding convergence of numerous unexpected "coincidences" that make intelligent life possible on Earth, and in all likelihood, nowhere else in the universe.

In exploring these recent discoveries, Lee Strobel meets with Dr. Guillermo Gonzalez and Dr. Jay Wesley Richards, coauthors of the book *The Privileged Planet*. After hashing out a long list of unique characteristics of our own galaxy, our sun, and our planet, they then began to discuss another amazing coincidence: a whole new dimension of evidence that suggests

this astounding world was created, in part, so we could have the adventure of exploring it.{13}

One of the more interesting examples given is that of a solar eclipse. Perfect solar eclipses have allowed scientists to do things such as determine specific properties of stars and confirm predictions associated with Einsteins theory of relativity. Such things would be extremely difficult to explore if it werent for total eclipses. However, such eclipses are unique to Earth within our solar system. Of the nine planets and over sixty moons, only Earth provides the optimal scenario for viewing an eclipse. This is possible because our moon, which is 400 times smaller than our Sun, happens to also be exactly 400 times closer. This allows for just the right conditions for a perfect solar eclipse.

What intrigues Gonzalez is that the very time and place where perfect solar eclipses appear in our universe also corresponds to the one time and place where there are observers to see them.{14} Richards adds, What is mysterious is that the same conditions that give us a habitable planet also make our location so wonderful for scientific measurement and discovery. So we say there's a correlation between habitability and measurability.{15}

Indeed, this is exactly what we would expect if an all-loving, all-powerful God created the universe not only to sustain man but also, and most importantly, that man could find Him through it.

## Information

In 1871, Darwin suggested in a personal letter that life may have originated spontaneously in some warm little pond, with all sorts [of chemicals] present.{16} However, in his day the immense complexity of living cells was virtually unknown. Today thats not the case. Modern science has revealed that

cells are extremely complex and that this complexity is governed by the information packed structures of DNA. This raises the question, Where did this information come from?

To answer this question Strobel enlists the help of Dr. Stephen Meyer, who has degrees in physics, geology, history, and philosophy. During the course of their discussion, Meyer elaborates on various explanations as to the origin of information in the first living cell. After describing the virtual impossibility of simple random chance over time producing such information, and acknowledging the fact that virtually all origin-of-life experts have utterly rejected such an approach,{17} Strobel focuses Meyer in on a more recent attempt at an explanation, that which at times has been called *biochemical predestination*.

Meyer says the idea is that the development of life was inevitable because the amino acids in proteins and the bases, or letters, in the DNA alphabet had self-ordering capacities that accounted for the origin of the information in these molecules.{18} He then goes on to explain why this notion just isnt true.

First, he notes that the kind of self-ordering we see in nature, such as that in salt crystals, is repetitive; a particular sequence is simply repeated over and over again. It would be like handing a person an instruction book for how to build an automobile, Meyer explains, but all the book said was the-the-the-the-the. You couldnt hope to convey all the necessary information with that one-word vocabulary.{19}

Secondly, and more importantly, he points out that science has demonstrated the complete absence of any attraction between the four letters of the DNA code themselves. So theres nothing chemically that forces them into any particular sequence, Meyer states. The sequencing has to come from outside the system.{20}

For Strobel, as well as many scientists, the conclusion is compelling: An intelligent entity has quite literally spelled out evidence of His existence through the four chemical letters in the genetic code. Its almost as if the Creator autographed every cell.{21}

## Consciousness

Webster defines consciousness as the quality or state of being aware especially of something within oneself.{22} According to Darwinists, the physical world is all there is. Consciousness, therefore, is nothing more than a byproduct of the properties of chemicals. As far back as 1871, evolutionists believed that the mind is a function of matter, when that matter has attained a certain degree of organization.{23} Is this really true? Is the mind simply, as MITs Marvin Minsky put it, a computer made of meat?{24} Or is the Bible correct in its assertion that men and women are comprised of both material and immaterial components?

To address this question, Strobel interviews Dr. J. P. Moreland, who has degrees in chemistry and theology, and a Ph.D. in philosophy. One of the most compelling arguments presented by Moreland during this interview was the positive experimental evidence that consciousness and the self are more than simply a physical byproduct of the brain. For example, Moreland said, neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield electrically stimulated the brains of epilepsy patients and found he could cause them to move their arms or legs, turn their heads or eyes, talk, or swallow. Invariably the patient would respond by saying, I didn't do that. You did. According to Penfield, the patient thinks of himself as having an existence separate from his body. No matter how much Penfield probed the cerebral cortex, he said, There is no place . . . where electrical stimulation will cause a patient to [think]. Thats because [thought] originates in the conscious self, not the brain.{25}

As Strobel notes in agreement, it is evidence like this which has led one pair of scientists to conclude that physics, neuroscience, and humanistic psychology all converge on the same principle: mind is not reducible to matter. . . . The vain expectation that matter might someday account for mind . . . is like the alchemist's dream of producing gold from lead.[\[26\]](#)

## Conclusion

It is evidences like these, as well as the many others presented by Lee Strobel, which has continued to persuade scientists in every field of study that there must be a Designer. Naturalistic explanations are not sufficient to explain the beauty, complexity, and design that we observe both around us and within us. Strobel, indeed, presents an amazingly strong case for a Creator.

## Notes

1. Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004) jacket.
2. Ibid., 97.
3. Ibid., 98.
4. Brad Lemley, "Guth's Grand Guess," *Discover* (April 2002) p. 35.
5. Strobel, 101.
6. Ibid., 110.
7. Ibid., 126.
8. Ibid., 132.
9. Ibid., 132.
10. Ibid., 130.
11. Ibid., 150.
- 12., Ibid., 153.
13. Ibid., 185.
14. Ibid., 186.
15. Ibid., 186.
16. Francis Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*



(New York: D. Appleton, 1887), 202.

17. Strobel, 229.

18. Ibid., 232.

19. Ibid., 234.

20. Ibid., 235.

21. Ibid., 244.

22. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., s.v., "Consciousness."

23. Thomas Huxley, "Mr. Darwin's Critics," *Contemporary Review* (November 1871)

24. Strobel, 250.

25. Ibid., 258.

26. Ibid., 272.

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## **"What's a Good Book to Give to a Seeker?"**

My coworker seems to be searching about religion in general. She is a single mom and I want to provide her a book to gain insight into Christianity and how it will change her life. Something that is simple and easy to read. Do you have any recommendations?

Yes!! Lee Strobel's excellent book *The Case for Christ*. Your coworker doesn't need Christianity. . . she needs Jesus. Strobel was a hardened atheist, a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, who chased down experts who could talk to him about Christ. It not only is very convincing, it's a wonderful way to walk through his steps toward placing his faith in Christ himself.

I'm glad you asked!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Help! My Doubts Scare Me!”**

Dear Sue Bohlin,

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I e-mailed Ray earlier too. Anyways, I was reading an e-mail discussion you had with somebody, who didn't believe in God. You said something in it about how it's not an intellect issue, but a heart issue. This is hard for me to accept. I'm ashamed admitting this, but oh gosh its hard for me to admit. Maybe I won't. I could say that I don't believe in God, but that just sounds way too harsh. Have you heard of anybody who was a Christian, but then they began to have doubts and became agnostic? That's how I feel. I asked Jesus into my heart when I was younger (I'm 18 now), but for a long time I've just been so skeptical. I guess I'm not a Christian, because a Christian knows that he or she is one, and I don't. I don't know how to express what I've been going through lately. Everyday I think about my doubt and it depresses me. I'm not sure if I'll ever get rid of it and that scares me. I desire to believe in God so much, but it's hard. I have so many questions. I wonder why God doesn't show himself to me so I know for sure that He is there. I don't know. Maybe He has but it's just not enough. Maybe I don't have enough faith.

Another thing that really doesn't help me is some of the stuff that I have read on the internet. Different books that I've read about have caused me to have even more doubt. Have you heard of *The Bible Unearthed...*, or *The Jesus Puzzle...*? I haven't

read any of them, but read reviews. Anyways, the second one I think denies that Jesus was a historical person. That really bothers me. Earlier today I was reading something on the web where this person was being critical of Lee Strobel (who wrote *The Case for Christ*). I really like that book (not done with it yet), but after what I read on the internet about it, I wonder if it really shows that Jesus was a historical person. I don't know. Maybe I just let other people's conflicting views on Christianity get to me too much, but after reading these things, I start to wonder if maybe they are correct on what they are arguing.

Anyways, to me, my problem doesn't seem to be a heart issue because I really would like to believe in God. I desire to believe in Him and live for Him, but it's hard. Is there something that I lack? Do I just not have enough faith? I don't know, maybe I don't. Well I think I've made this long enough. If there's any advice you could give me I would appreciate it. Maybe you could pray for me. Thanks a lot.

I know you don't know me, but I REALLY wish I could reach through this computer screen and put my arms around you and give you a big hug and tell you IT'S GOING TO BE OK!!!!!! It is so OK to have doubts, to wonder about where you stand spiritually, because, at 18, you are at the point you need to be—deciding for yourself what you should keep and what you should jettison of what you have been taught. You are an adult now but you probably don't feel that you have enough information to make an informed, committed adult choice about something as important as eternal destiny and one's relationship with God!

Good news—lots of other people are also in your shoes. But they don't ask for help, and bless you, you did, and there IS help for you!! There are good answers, and you'll be stronger and more confident for having voiced your doubts and questions, once you're on the other side of this spiritual crisis. It's OK, \_\_\_\_\_. . . .God is walking through it

with you.

*I guess I'm not a Christian, because a Christian knows that he or she is one, and I don't.*

Well, no, actually that's not true. Many Christians have assurance that we are Christians, and many Christians fervently *hope* they are but they're not sure. That's an important issue all by itself: can we *know* we're saved and going to heaven? Can we lose our salvation? Our founder and first president, Jimmy Williams, addressed this issue in one of [his e-mails](#).

*I don't know how to express what I've been going through lately. Everyday I think about my doubt and it depresses me. I'm not sure if I'll ever get rid of it and that scares me.*

I wish you could see God's heart as He watches you wrestle with your doubts and fears. He loves you so much (man, I feel like Monica on *Touched by an Angel* here!) and is very tender toward you as you experience these strong and scary emotions. I understand your fear that you'll never get rid of the doubt. But doubt is like darkness—you don't overcome it by pushing it away, you make it go away by bringing in light. As you seek light and truth and to know what is really true and real, God will show you the light. I am so grateful that you came to us at Probe instead of some New Age "all religions are the same" website!

*I desire to believe in God so much, but it's hard. I have so many questions. I wonder why God doesn't show himself to me so I know for sure that He is there. I don't know. Maybe He has but it's just not enough. Maybe I don't have enough faith.*

What's important isn't the amount or strength of our faith, but the *object* of our faith. God is strong enough to handle your doubts and to show you, in ways so intimate you will know it's HIM, that He is real and He loves you very much.

*Another thing that really doesn't help me is some of the stuff that i have read on the internet. Different books that I've read about have caused me to have even more doubt. Have you heard of The Bible Unearthed..., or The Jesus Puzzle...? I haven't read any of them, but read reviews. Anyways, the second one I think denies that Jesus was a historical person. That really bothers me.*

With good reason. Some of the best Christian apologetics books started out with the author's intention to disprove Christianity, and the facts overwhelmed the skeptics into belief. The entire world was affected by the life of Jesus Christ, in one way or another, but He didn't exist? Now THAT takes a lot of faith!

*Earlier today I was reading something on the web where this person was being critical of Lee Strobel (who wrote The Case for Christ). I really like that book (not done with it yet), but after what I read on the internet about it, I wonder if it really shows that Jesus was a historical person.*

Did you know Lee Strobel started out as an atheist? I'm glad you're reading it; it was a wise choice. So is his second book, *The Case for Faith*. I found this statement from him in an interview online: "I have found that the testimony of history points compellingly toward Jesus Christ having returned from the dead in the ultimate authentication of His claim to be God. To me faith in Jesus is not blind or irrational. I have so much independent evidence that the New Testament writings are reliable that I would be swimming upstream against the evidence if I were to follow the teachings of the Koran or the Book of Mormon. The more I subject the New Testament to analysis, the more I pepper it with questions, the more I walk away utterly convinced of its trustworthiness."

*I don't know. Maybe I just let other people's conflicting views on Christianity get to me too much, but after reading*

*these things, I start to wonder if maybe they are correct on what they are arguing.*

Just about every truth, especially those of eternal importance, will be countered with something counterfeit, because we're in a very real battle for our minds and souls. It's unfortunate that the counter-arguments can *appear* so compelling, but the issue is ultimate truth. Right now, you're on the right track in seeking truth and desiring to sort through the clamoring voices that attack it.

*Anyways, to me, my problem doesn't seem to be a heart issue because I really would like to believe in God. I desire to believe in Him and live for Him, but its hard. Is there something that I lack? Do I just not have enough faith? I don't know, maybe I don't.*

It's been said that the Christian life isn't hard, it's IMPOSSIBLE. You can't live for God in your own strength—not for any length of time, anyway, without burning out and getting majorly discouraged. The secret is to allow Jesus to live His life through you by yielding to Him. That, by the way, is one of the things that sets Christianity apart from every other religion: God inside us, offering to live His life through us, without any loss of our own individuality. But right now, the big issue is what to do with your head/heart conflict. Fortunately, there is a PERFECT book that I believe will make all the difference in the world to you.

It's called [\*Making Your Faith Your Own: A Guidebook for Believers With Questions\*](#) by Teresa Vining. I was privileged to read Teresa's manuscript and LOVED her book. One of its strengths is that she was in the exact place you are now, and she takes you through the questions AND the answers, and suggests you keep a journal as you work through the book so you can decide what you believe and commit to, and what you're not willing to. It is a terrific book on apologetics, and she is very respectful of the person with questions and doubts. I

think you will love this book too.

*Well I think I've made this long enough. If there's any advice you could give me I would appreciate it. Maybe you could pray for me.*

I'd like to pray for you right now!

Father, I lift up \_\_\_\_\_ to You and I thank You for her intellect and her honesty in facing her doubts and questions. Thank You that You are not in the least bit troubled by them because You know You are real and true and able to take her through this time to a point where she will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that YOU ARE. I ask You to send her little intimate glimpses of You and open her eyes so she'll know it's You saying "Hi." I ask that You give her a peace when she's pursuing truth and give her an uncomfortable restlessness when she's moving toward the darkness and deception that would seek to draw her away from You. Lord, I thank You for Your hand on \_\_\_\_\_'s life and on her heart and on her mind, and by faith I thank You for taking her to the place where she will joyfully serve You with all three. Lord, make her feel loved and protected and cherished by You.

In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

Hope this helps, dear one!

Sue