



LEADERS'
SUPPLEMENT

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Practical Discussions for
Personal Evangelism

APOLOGETICS—SOME SHORT ANSWERS...

These are not exhaustive. You can add your own explanations but beware of allowing yourself to be deflected from the central issues of the faith. Bring the conversation back to talking about Jesus

1 Who made God? God was always there. God is the first cause of everything.

2 What about dinosaurs / evolution? Some Christians have great doubts about the theory of evolution and believe that the Genesis account is to be taken literally (that God created the world in six literal days). Others believe that the Genesis account is telling people who created, and why creation took place, rather than how. Their understanding is that you can believe that God controls the process of evolution. (To go much beyond this is often leads to being side-tracked from more important issues).

3 How can we be sure that the Bible is true?:-

The accuracy in the transmission of the texts

The relatively short span between the events of the New Testament and the writing of the Gospels.

The evidence of the Resurrection and accounts of eye-witnesses who were still alive when the gospels were written (John and Matthew were written by disciples)

The witness and experience of people through the ages who have found that the gospel works in their own lives.

4 How do we know the Gospels haven't been altered? The time between the events and the written records is too short for significant alteration. Eyewitnesses were alive to check the records. The eyewitnesses present as people of integrity. There are thousands of fragments, found in various places around the Mediterranean within a couple of hundred years of the events, which *very* substantially agree, confirming agreement with the original manuscripts.

5 How can God guide us? Principally the Bible. Prayer. Prayer and circumstances. Prophets.

6 What does God look like? God is spirit, not human. No-one knows what God looks like.

7 If God knows the future, why create Adam and Eve, who disobeyed? We can only speculate here. We know that love and relationships have to be free, not coerced. Even knowing what humans would do, God allowed them to experience dis-

obedience so that their choice to obey could be made freely with full understanding of the two possible ways to live. Only with the possibility of not loving can love have any meaning (otherwise it is conditioning).

8 Why does God allow evil to happen? God gives us free will so that our choices can have meaning. We are not robots. God allows evil to occur and often comparatively "innocent" people are hurt. He could limit all evil, but where would that leave *you*? You would not be able to move or think anything even slightly wrong. Probably God does limit a great deal of evil in the world, but who are we to determine where he should intervene, or not? One day, though, he will put everything right.

9 Is there a hell? We may not know the exact nature of hell, but it appears to be a separation from God, and therefore from all that is good. The Bible talks about fire and darkness. The former may be figurative and the latter literal. The main thing is that God sent Jesus to bring us back to him. He has given us a choice. If we reject God then that is where we will end up — apart from him. God gives us what we want.

10 What about all the damage Christianity has done through the ages? Atheist who propose that Christianity should be eradicated, conveniently forget the vast amount of good that it has achieved in science, education, health and civilisation (particularly ethics). The atrocities have very little to do with the teaching of Jesus and true Christianity. Abuses by the "Church" confirm that Christians are sinful people saved by God's grace. This does not excuse those actions, but affirms that they are antithetical to genuine Christian practice.

11 Why believe in a god I can't see and doesn't answer my prayers? More than 90% of the matter and energy in the universe is invisible. We have at present no way of seeing it or recording it but we know it must be there (It is labelled dark energy and dark matter) We may not see God directly but we can experience his influence in the universe and in the lives of people. We know that many prayers are answered in quite remarkable and even miraculous ways. I can't know why your prayers don't appear to be answered, but as we trust God I am convinced that he has some purpose in the things that do or don't happen to us. Some of those things we may discover later. Some we may never know. God does want us to keep engaging with him. It is the only way that can make any sense out of life. I do know that God loves you, and that is why he sent Jesus., so that we can see what God is like..