

STAND FIRM AGAINST ATHEISM

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The title of this sermon is “Stand Firm Against Atheism.”

Right now we’re in a sermon series called “Stand Firm.”

The truth is that many Christians fall away all the time. They stop going to church. They get caught up in sin. They stop praying and reading their Bibles. They stop serving God. They get pulled into a cult. Or they get pulled away by false teaching. In some cases they stop believing altogether. And so this sermon series is an encouragement to stand firm.

Our theme verse for this series is **1 Corinthians 16:13**.¹ “Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.”

What does it mean to stand firm in the faith? It means five things at least:

1. Hold on to sound doctrine, no matter what.
2. Stay active in church, no matter what.
3. Maintain an intimate love relationship with God, no matter what.
4. Keep serving God, no matter what.
5. Keep pursuing righteousness, no matter what.

In this series we are looking specifically at **five bad ideas** that have the potential to pull you away from God:

1. Evolution: People are not a special act of creation by God; they evolved naturally from monkeys.
2. Atheism: God does not exist; the material world is all there is.
3. Pluralism: There are many paths to heaven; Jesus is not the only way.

¹ Unless noted, all Bible verses are from the Christian Standard Bible, 2017.

4. Annihilationism: Some people go to heaven, and those that don't just cease to exist; there is no such thing as eternal hell.
5. Sexual Liberation: The Bible's restrictions on sex are harmful; happiness can only be found through total sexual freedom.

Last week we looked at the lie of evolution.

ATHEISM

Today we're going to talk about standing firm against the lie of atheism.

Atheism has been around for a long time, but in the past fifteen years or so we have seen the rise of a new form of atheism.

There are **four major leaders**, also called the Four Horsemen of the New Atheism.

The **first, Richard Dawkins**, an evolutionary biologist, is the author of numerous books, including *The God Delusion*. In it he wrote,

- “Faith can be very very dangerous, and deliberately to implant it into the vulnerable mind of an innocent child is a grievous wrong.”
- “[God is] a vindictive bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser , a misogynistic, homophobic racist, an infanticidal, genocidal, phillicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”
- “When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called Religion.”

The **second** of the Four Horsemen of the New Atheism is **Christopher Hitchens**, a writer who recently passed away. He wrote a book called *God is not Great*. This is what he had to say:

- “Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience.”

- “One must state it plainly. Religion comes from the period of human prehistory where nobody had the smallest idea what was going on. It comes from the bawling and fearful infancy of our species, and is a babyish attempt to meet our inescapable demand for knowledge (as well as for comfort, reassurance and other infantile needs).”

The **third** of the Four Horsemen is **Sam Harris**, who has a Ph.D. in neuroscience from UCLA. Among his many books is *The End of Faith*, in which he wrote,

- “[I]t is difficult to imagine a set of beliefs more suggestive of mental illness than those that lie at the heart of many of our religious traditions.”
- Al Mohler said of Sam Harris, “Harris has argued that belief in God is such a danger to human civilization that religious liberty should be denied in order that science might reign supreme as the intellectual foundation of human society.”

The **fourth** of these is philosopher **Daniel Dennett**, who wrote:

- Religious people have “dedicated their lives to an illusion.”
- He also said, “There are no good reasons to believe in God.”
- “I think that there are no forces on this planet more dangerous to us all than the fanaticisms of fundamentalism, of all the species: Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as countless smaller infections.”

The reason I bring up the New Atheism is because it is different from the atheism of the past.

The atheism of the past used to argue that there was no God.

The New Atheism argues that there is no God, but also that belief in God is dangerous to society.

They would argue that teaching children about God is a form of child abuse.

They mock and despise people of faith as both dangerous and ignorant.

The New Atheists are angry and aggressive and have a goal to wipe out religion.

They are not just unbelievers; they hate religion and want to wipe it out.

Let me be clear: There is a very real conspiracy to either persuade you, or intimidate you into giving up your faith altogether, or to at least water it down some.

In *What's So Great About Christianity*, **Dinesh D'Souza** wrote about the new atheists, "The atheists no longer want to be tolerated. They want to monopolize the public square and to expel Christians from it. They want political questions like abortion to be divorced from religious and moral claims. They want to control school curricula so they can promote a secular ideology and undermine Christianity. They want to discredit the factual claims of religion, and they want to convince the rest of society that Christianity is not only mistaken but also evil. They blame religion for the crimes of history and for the ongoing conflicts in the world today. In short, they want to make religion – and especially the Christian religion – disappear from the face of the earth."

Atheists today want to intimidate you into giving up your beliefs.

They want to say you are stupid for believing in God; and that believing in God makes you a bad person.

So here's the question. Are you ready to stand firm against the New Atheists? Are you ready for any an atheist to challenge you by saying, "Show me the evidence for God's existence"?

Today I want to show you that not only is there evidence for God's existence, but there too much evidence to not believe in God.

I want to give you five impossible questions for atheists. These are questions that atheists simply cannot answer with any sense.

5 IMPOSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR ATHEISTS

1. Where did everything come from?

If you asked an atheist where the earth came from, they would say it came from the Big Bang, a giant explosion, a collision of subnuclear particles and jolts of electrical charges, that occurred billions of years ago.

But what caused the Big Bang?

They might say, "I don't know; something did."

But where did that something come from?

Here's what we know.

First, anything that begins to exist has a cause.

Something cannot come from nothing. That's doesn't make sense.

This a universally accepted law of causality, or the law of cause and effect.

Second, the universe began to exist.

Scientists universally agree that the universe had a beginning.

The physicist **Stephen Hawking** said, "Almost everyone now believes that the universe, and time itself, had a beginning at the Big Bang."

In other words, at one point there was nothing – no space, no matter, not even time – and then bang, there was something.

Third, the universe must have a cause.

If everything that begins to exist has a cause, and the universe has beginning, then the universe has a cause.

Consider what this means. Before the universe, there is no space, no matter, no time, no nature. Just nothingness.

So what could have caused the universe to come into being? What could have caused the Big Bang?

It had to be something or Someone who is spaceless, immaterial, and timeless – Someone supernatural. Those are attributes of God.

Apologist **Frank Turek** wrote, “The universe began to exist. Nothing in nature could have caused this beginning, for all of nature originated at the Big Bang. Hence, the universe was caused to exist by a supernatural force: God.”

Another writer said, “In short, everything in the universe is the effect of some other cause. Nothing we can see, touch, taste, hear, or smell just pops into existence from nowhere. If everything in the universe has been caused by something else, then we must look outside the universe to find the cause of it all, the first and uncaused cause.”

So the first reason we know that God exists is that something can't come from nothing.

Something outside of nature, something older than the universe itself, something outside of space, time and matter something eternal, had to create the universe. That's the definition of God.

Either that or you have to believe that nothing created everything.

Psalm 33:8-9 says, “8 Let the whole earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spoke, and it came into being; he commanded, and it came into existence.”

In a debate against Cardinal George Pell, Richard Dawkins said, “Of course it’s counterintuitive that you can get something from nothing. Of course common sense doesn’t allow you to get something from nothing. That’s why it’s interesting. It’s got to be interesting in order to give rise to the universe at all. Something pretty mysterious had to give rise to the origin of the universe. But exactly what’s meant by nothing, but whatever it is, it’s very, very simple.” The crowd chuckled and he said, “Why is that funny?” The Cardinal answered, “Well, I think it’s a bit funny to be trying to define nothing.” Then the crowd roared with laughter.

2. Where did life come from?

Atheists are big believers in evolution.

If you ask them where humans came from they will say from apes, which came from other mammals, which came from birds, which came from reptiles, which came from amphibians, which came from fish, which came from soft-bodied sea creatures, which came from worms, which came from multi-celled bacteria, which came from single-celled organisms, which came from the non-living elements of the earth.

But here’s the problem with that. It violates the scientific law of biogenesis.

Bio means life, and genesis means beginning.

The law of biogenesis is easy to understand.

It simply means that life comes from life. Life cannot come from non-life.

For about 2,000 years people believed in abiogenesis, or spontaneous generation.

They believed that a piece of dead meat could produce maggots, or that algae could spontaneously come from water, which is non-living.

But eventually scientists figured out that the maggots came from flies that laid eggs on the meat; and the algae came not from the water, but from living bacteria in the air that landed in the water.

Over time scientists came to discover that all life comes from life.

In other words, my pulpit is not living; it is just plastic and aluminum. This pulpit cannot and will not ever produce a living thing. Life can only come from life.

So back to our question. Where did life come from? Where did the first living single-celled organism come from? It couldn't have come from the non-living elements of the earth. That's impossible.

Once again, living things had to come from something eternal, immortal, and supernatural. And that's who God is.

Nehemiah 9:6 says, "You, Lord, are the only God. You created the heavens, the highest heavens with all their stars, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them, and all the stars of heaven worship you."

3. Why is life on earth possible?

Atheists can't explain why life on earth is possible.

Here's what I mean. Have you noticed that scientists still haven't found evidence of life on other planets? And they've been searching diligently since the 1960s. Why is that? Because it turns how that there are many factors that have to be in place in order for life to possible.

For example, **scientists know of 19 physical laws that must each be just right for life.**

Some examples are the electromagnetic force, the strong nuclear force, and the force of gravity.

If any of these 19 laws varied even slightly, then the universe could not support life.

For example, if the force of gravity were slightly larger, then stars would burn up too quickly for the formation of planets capable of supporting life. And if the force of gravity were slightly smaller, stars could not produce the heavy elements necessary for life.

And so all of the 19 different physical laws have to be just right in order for life to be possible anywhere in the universe.

But that's not all.

There are also **many factors that have to be just right in order for a planet to support life.**

Of the three types of galaxies, life is only possible in a spiral galaxy like the Milky Way.

A planet must be in just the right place within a galaxy to avoid harmful radiation.

A planet must have the right kind of star – most stars are too large, or too bright, or too unstable to support life, but the sun is just right.

A planet must be the right distance from its star in order to support life. If we were slightly closer to the sun, we would burn up; and if we were just slightly further away, we would freeze to death.

As well, a planet must have surrounding planets for protection from incoming comets – earth has Jupiter and Uranus.

A planet must have the right kind of moon to support life. Our moon wasn't the right size, and the right distance away, life would be impossible.

A planet requires just the right amount of oxygen to support life – 21 percent. If our atmosphere had just a little more oxygen, then fires would erupt spontaneously. If our atmosphere had just a little less oxygen, we would all suffocate.

Our atmosphere has just the right amount of transparency. Any more transparent, and we would burn up with solar radiation. Any less and not enough sun rays would reach the earth.

Or consider the earth's tilt. Our planet tilts at 23%. If it was 24% or 22%, the temperature would be too extreme for life on earth.

So what are the chances that all of these factors came together perfectly by accident? The chances are too slim to believe.

Apologist **Sean McDowell** said, “Imagine you are hiking through the mountains and discover an abandoned cabin. As you approach the cabin, you notice something unusual. The refrigerator is filled with your favorite food, the temperature is set to your liking, your favorite song is playing in the background, and all your favorite books, video games, and DVDs are sitting on the table. What would you conclude? Since chance would be out of the question, you would conclude that the cabin was designed with you in mind. Like this cabin, the laws of nature are just right for you to exist.”

This is called the fine-tuning argument, because scientists have discovered that the universe has been fine-tuned to support life on earth.

It's also called the anthropic argument. Anthropic means man, and it is the idea that the universe is fine-tuned to support human life on earth.

Stephen Hawking, Theoretical Physicist and cosmologist, Director of Research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology within the University of Cambridge said, “The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.”

Paul Davies, physicist and recipient of the Templeton Prize, said, “There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all... it seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature’s numbers to make the universe. The impression of design is overwhelming.”

Isaiah 45:18 says, “For this is what the Lord says—the Creator of the heavens, the God who formed the earth and made it, the one who established it (he did not create it to be a wasteland, but formed it to be inhabited)—he says, “I am the Lord, and there is no other.”

4. Where did morality come from?

People from all over the world, during all periods of history, have shared the same sense of morality.

There have been some minor variations, but in general, people have always believed that murder, lying, stealing, and adultery are wrong.

Everyone believes that love is better than hate; that courage is better than cowardice; that helping is better than hurting; that hurting someone is only justified if you have to hurt in order to protect, like a police officer or soldier, or if you have to hurt in order to heal – like a surgeon.

C.S. Lewis lists various universally recognized moral laws in his book *Abolition of Man* – impartial justice, truthfulness, kindness, mercy, marital fidelity, respect for human life.

C.S. Lewis, wrote, “Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five.” Again, Lewis’ point is that we all know that cowardice and betrayal are wrong. It’s intuitive.

Where does that knowledge come from?

Obviously everyone has the same moral law written on their hearts. But where did that come from? There had to be a Moral Law Giver.

That's exactly what the Bible says about God.

Romans 2:15 (NLT) says, "They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right."

What Paul is saying is that when people who have never even heard the Ten Commandments, such as do no steal, do not kill, do not lie, do not commit adultery, honor your parents, when those people still follow those commands, when they agree with them, it is proof that God's moral law is written on their hearts.

Now sometimes atheists will argue that there is no such thing as universal morality, but they don't really believe that.

For example, an atheist might say that it is universally wrong to tell a lie.

But if you call him a liar, he will feel insulted; if you lie about him, he will feel betrayed; if you lie to him, he will feel outraged.

He doesn't think it is a big deal when he tells a lie, but when he is the victim of dishonesty and deception, he knows it is wrong.

He cannot deny it. Where does this knowledge come from? The moral law in our hearts proves there is a Moral Law Giver.

One of the most common arguments used by atheists is how can you believe in a God who would do such evil things, or allow slavery?

Now I admit, it is hard to understand why God did certain things in the Bible.

But the atheist's question proves that he believes in universal, absolute morality.

He is admitting that he at least believes that things like slavery are universally wrong.

But how does he know that? Where does this confident sense of morality come from?

There must be a Moral Law Giver. God is a moral being; He is good, and loving, and just, and He created man in His image to be a moral being.

Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female."

5. Why does the universe appear to be intelligently designed?

Design is proof of a Designer. This is called the teleological argument; the Greek word *teleos* comes from the Greek word "design". Let me explain it.

When you look at your cell phone, it is obvious that it had a designer. Someone with a lot of intelligence had to put it together. It is so complex.

What is more complex? A cell phone or the human body? The human body.

Your DNA, digestive system, nervous system, and cardiovascular system are infinitely more complex than an iPhone.

And so if the iPhone obviously had a designer, then it's obvious that the human body had a designer, too.

Take a simple children's book.

To you and to me, a children's book is very simply. The pictures are simple; the words and sentences and ideas are simple. It is written so that a young child can understand it.

But is it possible that this book, with its binding, its colorful pictures, its organized words and sentences just came together over a long period of time through natural forces? No.

Natural forces never create complex, specific messages.

Only intelligent minds can create complex, intelligent messages. We know that this book was put together by an intelligent designer.

Now let's think about DNA -- deoxyribonucleic acid.

Scientists call DNA the instruction book for life.

Evangelist **Ray Comfort** says, "DNA is the genetic information encoded in the cell of every living thing that instructs our cells how to grow and how to function. It's our genes that determine whether our skin be dark or light; have brown or blue eyes, or red, or green, or yellow; have red hair, be brunette, or blonde; be tall or not so tall; or the color of our feathers if we're a bird. Whether we're humans, fish, animals, insects, or plant life, the way our bodies look and operate has all been pre-written in the amazing code of our DNA."

What is DNA? It is specific, complex information. **Ray Comfort** said, "The external nature of the information encoded in the DNA molecule is a complete set of software instructions directing the formation and reproduction of human beings, both male and female, and all other living things."

Bill Gates said, "DNA is like a computer software program, but far, far more advanced than any software ever created."

Now think about this. Your DNA instruction book is found in every cell of your body. It has 46 chapters, one for every chromosome. Each chapter in your DNA is between 45 and 250 million letters long. So the DNA in one cell of your body has 3.2 billion letters. That's not all. There a million, million cells in your body. A cell is so small that you could fit 40,000 cells inside the "o" on your page. If your DNA was laid out end for end it would go to the sun and back a number of times.

Now if it is obvious that an intelligent designer put together a small, simple children's book, then how much more obvious is it that an intelligent Designer put together your DNA?

Psalm 139:13-14 says, "13 For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well."

CONCLUSION

A college professor, an avowed Atheist, was teaching his class. He shocked several of his students when he flatly stated he was going to prove there was no God. Addressing the ceiling he shouted: "God, if you are real, then I want you to knock me off this platform. I'll give you 15 minutes!"

The lecture room fell silent. You could have heard a pin fall. Ten minutes went by. Again he taunted God, saying, "Here I am, God. I'm still waiting."

His countdown got down to the last couple of minutes when a Marine - just released from active duty and newly registered in the class - walked up to the professor, hit him full force, and sent him tumbling from his lofty platform. The professor was out cold!

At first, the students were shocked and babbled on in confusion. The young Marine took a seat in the front row and sat silent. The class fell silent...waiting. Eventually, the professor came to, shaken. He looked at

the young Marine in the front row. When the professor regained his senses and could speak he asked: "What's the matter with you? Why did you do that?" "God was busy...He sent me."

Does God exist?

Absolutely.

And there is plenty of evidence.

There are questions about the universe that atheists simply cannot answer; questions that don't make sense if there is no God.

Where did everything come from?

Where did life come from?

Why is life on earth possible?

Where did morality come from?

Why does the universe appear to be intelligently designed?

But these questions are easily answered by the existence of an eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, good God.

Where did everything come from? Something cannot come from nothing. God existed before and outside of the universe, and He created it.

Where did life come from? Life cannot come from non-life. God created life.

Why is life on earth possible? It can't be by chance. It's too improbable. Life on earth is possible because God made it that way.

Where did morality come from? God is good, and holy, and just, and He created mankind in His image.

Why does the universe appear to be intelligently designed? Because there is an intelligent Designer.