

Article: JAQ101

THE ANSWER IS THE QUESTION

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People need answers to their questions about Christianity, but waiting for them to ask a question isn't the only way to begin an evangelistic encounter. There are many ways to ask your way into a conversation about the gospel. If you start by asking questions about a popular book or movie, for example, you can direct the conversation to spiritual matters. Then, by asking questions that reveal people's beliefs and the assumptions behind their beliefs, you may discover what stands between them and Christ.

Below is a hypothetical conversation with a skeptic who has some of the common objections to belief in God. Most skeptics or atheists have these objections not because they've studied the issues carefully, but because they don't *want* Christianity to be true, and/or they've accepted the notion that faith and reason are at odds.

As you read the dialogue, notice how the right questions can reveal the basis of people's beliefs and objections. You may not have all the answers, but if you ask good questions in your conversations, you may help people realize they don't really know what they thought they knew. You may even get skeptics to doubt their own skepticism. At the very least, you'll plant a seed that may cause them to reexamine the basis for their faulty views.

Christian: Hey, what did you think of the *Da Vinci Code*?

Skeptic: Good book! I can't wait to see the movie.

Christian: The book casts a lot of doubt on the Bible. What do you think of that?

Skeptic: I think the Bible is filled with myths.

Christian: Such as?

Skeptic: Jonah. Who can believe that nonsense?

Christian: Why is that not believable?

Skeptic: Because science has disproved miracles.

Christian: What science has disproved miracles?

Skeptic: Modern science.

Christian: How do you define "science"?

Skeptic: It's using experiments to prove a theory.

Christian: What if you can't do experiments because you're investigating the past?

Skeptic: You mean like a courtroom investigation?

Christian: Yeah. You can't do an experiment to find out who committed a crime.

Skeptic: Well, what definition of science do you have in mind?

Christian: I think Francis Bacon, the father of modern science, had it right. He said that true knowledge is knowledge of causes. In other words, science is a search for causes.

Skeptic: I can accept that. So what?

Christian: Well, logically, there are only two types of causes: intelligent and nonintelligent (or natural). But many modern scientists rule out intelligent causes before they look at the evidence. So, to say that modern science has disproved miracles is false; modern scientists have ruled them out, not proved them out.

Skeptic: But science deals only with natural causes.

Christian: Can you prove that through science?

Skeptic: Well, no.

Christian: That's because it's an assumption you make in order to do what you call science. Science is built on philosophy.

Skeptic: So? What's the problem?

Christian: If you rule out intelligent causes before examining the evidence, then you can't discover what really caused intelligently designed things. For example, is the geologist being unscientific when he claims an intelligent cause for the faces on Mount Rushmore?

Skeptic: No, but that's because we know that people cause sculptures like Mount Rushmore.

Christian: How do we know natural laws don't do it?

Skeptic: Come on. It's obvious.

Christian: Why is it obvious?

Skeptic: Because we never see natural laws create sculptures.

Christian: That's right; so when we discover something from the past that has the clear marks of intelligence, isn't it reasonable to believe that it had an intelligent cause? It certainly would be a mistake to rule out intelligent causes before we even look at the evidence!

Skeptic: What does this have to do with the Bible and miracles?

Christian: Because we have scientific evidence that the greatest miracle in the Bible is the work of a powerful, intelligent being.

Skeptic: You have scientific evidence for Jonah?

Christian: No, not Jonah. That's nothing compared to the greatest miracle in the Bible.

Skeptic: What's more incredible than Jonah?

Christian: The greatest miracle in the Bible is in the first verse: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. If that's true, then every other miracle, including Jonah, is believable. A God who performed the biggest miracle of all—creating the universe out of nothing—can perform the smaller ones like parting the Red Sea, keeping Jonah safe in a great fish, or raising Jesus from the dead. Doesn't that make sense?

Skeptic: Hold on. What's the scientific evidence for Genesis 1:1?

Christian: The second law of thermodynamics, the expanding universe, and Einstein's general theory of relativity are all accepted observations of modern science, and they show us that the universe is not eternal—it had a beginning. If it had a beginning, then it had a beginner. And this beginner left clear signs of intelligence because this universe includes more than 100 environmental conditions that are precisely tweaked to support life here on earth.

Skeptic: If that's true, then who made God?

Christian: No one made God—He's the unmade, eternal, self-existing First Cause.

Skeptic: If you can have an unmade God, then why can't I have an unmade universe?

Christian: Because there are only two possibilities: either the universe has always existed or something outside the universe has always existed. The scientific evidence shows us that the universe hasn't always existed—it had a beginning. So, the uncaused first cause must be outside the universe. That's implied by Genesis 1:1: God must be outside the universe because He created it.

Skeptic: You're going beyond science.

Christian: No, I'm only going where the evidence leads. Since the evidence leads beyond your definition of science, don't you think your definition of science is too narrow?

Skeptic: But if we defer to God, we've committed the God-of-the-gaps fallacy. How many times did the ancients think that God caused something—like lightning or earthquakes—only for us to discover natural causes for them later? Whenever we have a gap in our knowledge, we always seem to discover a natural cause. We'll discover a natural cause for the universe some day.

Christian: Why do you think that is likely?

Skeptic: Because of the progress of science.

Christian: It has nothing to do with the progress of science. It's highly unlikely we'll find a natural cause for the universe, because, unless all of modern cosmology is wrong, nature itself had a beginning. A cause must exist before the effect, but nature didn't exist until the universe began. So, when it comes to the origin of the universe, natural causes are ruled out. If the cause must be beyond nature, then it must be supernatural, correct?

Skeptic: Isaac Asimov said there was positive and negative energy before creation.

Christian: No, until creation, there was literally no thing. All time, space, energy, and matter came into existence at creation. So, what's more reasonable: to say that someone created something out of nothing or that no one created something out of nothing?

Skeptic: But your answer is the God-of-the-gaps!

Christian: No, it isn't. We don't merely lack a natural explanation for the universe, we have observational evidence for an intelligent creator.

Skeptic: What observational evidence do you have for God? According to your own theology, you can't see Him or touch Him. So how can you have observational evidence for such a cause?

Christian: Have you ever seen gravity?

Skeptic: No.

Christian: Then how do you know it exists?

Skeptic: Because I don't float away.

Christian: That's the same way we know God. We observe effects that point to Him. We may not see God directly, but we see effects that only He could be responsible for. Here's a key question for you: If there is no God, how did this incredibly designed universe come into existence?

Skeptic: I prefer to say "I don't know" rather than punt to God.

Christian: What would you say to someone who said he wasn't sure a book had an author?

Skeptic: That's stupid. Every book has an author, even if it is anonymous.

Christian: Yes, and we know that because a book is an intelligent effect, it is not caused by natural law. The universe and life are like that—effects of intelligence. You can say "I don't know," but isn't it possible you're ignoring the facts?

Skeptic: I'm still not convinced.

Christian: Can I ask you a rather personal question?

Skeptic: Why not? You've been asking me questions for the past 10 minutes.

Christian: Because this one may cause you to reveal your soul. I've found that many skeptics reject God not because evidence for His existence is lacking, but because they don't want to give up control over their lives by doing things God's way. In other words, their objection is in the will, not the mind. So here's my question: If I showed you evidence that demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists and Christ rose from the dead, would you then become a Christian?

Skeptic: Well, I doubt the evidence is there.

Christian: Suppose it is. I can recommend a good book that presents this evidence. Would you be willing to read it?

Skeptic: No, I'm not interested in reading Christian propaganda.

Christian: How do you know it's Christian propaganda?

Skeptic: It's written by Christians who have an agenda.

Christian: Don't all writers have an agenda? Don't atheists have an agenda when they write books that try to disprove Christianity? Do you dismiss those books?

Skeptic: No, but religious people are biased.

Christian: Might you be biased against religious people?

Skeptic: Atheists are religiously neutral.

Christian: No, they're not. All people—even skeptics and atheists—have some kind of religious viewpoint. If a religious viewpoint makes an author unable to get the facts straight, then you couldn't believe anything anyone writes! Isn't the real issue what the evidence might prove, not the writer's agenda?

Skeptic: Maybe, but I'm still skeptical.

Christian: Why are you skeptical of everything but skepticism?

Skeptic: Huh?

Christian: Maybe you should start doubting your doubts. Would you believe if you were shown the evidence?

Skeptic: I believe I gotta go.

Christian: Wait! You're not going to run from the truth like Jonah, are you?

— *Frank Turek*