

Evidences for Christian Beliefs

Date	Day	Lesson	Title	Teacher
7-Jan-17	Sun	1	Understanding Faith	Marty
10-Jan-17	Wed	2	The Christian's Faith	Marty
14-Jan-17	Sun	3	The Universe: God's Power & Deity	Marty
17-Jan-17	Wed	4	Man's Nature: God's Personhood	Marty
21-Jan-17	Sun	5	Looking for Communication from God	Phillip
24-Jan-17	Wed	6	Fulfilled Prophecies	Phillip
28-Jan-17	Sun	7	Messianic Prophecies	Phillip
31-Jan-17	Wed	8	Miracles & Jesus' Deity	Marty
4-Feb-17	Sun	9	Resurrection	Phillip
7-Feb-17	Wed	10	Behavior of Early Disciples	Phillip
11-Feb-17	Sun	11	Answering Objections	Marty
14-Feb-17	Wed	12	Dealing with Doubt	Marty
18-Feb-17	Sun	13	Review & Quiz	Marty

Evidences Lessons Content

Lesson 1: Understanding Faith

- The Basis of Faith (in anything) is Evidence
- Faith and Doubt (The "weight" of evidence produces Faith)
- Faith (the conviction) and Faith (trust in another)
- Need for the Material (Relevance) & Course Overview

Lesson 2: The Christian's Faith

- Key Conclusions:
 - An Infinite, Powerful, but Personal God Exists
 - The Bible is Inspired of God
 - Jesus is the Son of God, and has all Authority
- Definitions of Terms: Agnostic, Atheist, Deist
- The Relationship of Other Topics: (Authority, Evolution, Plan of Salvation)

Lesson 3: The Universe: Evidence of God's Power and Deity

- Alternative Explanations
- Evidence for a Supernatural Origin
- Consequences of Alternative Explanations

Lesson 4: Man's Nature: The Evidence of God's Personality

- Man's Moral Nature
- Other Uniquely Human Characteristics: Hope, Joy, Love, Humor, Justice
- The Moral Argument

Lesson 5: Looking for Communication from God

- Likely Characteristics of a Revelation
- Summary of Evidence for the Inspiration of the Bible
 - Unity
 - Survival
 - Historical & Scientific Accuracy
 - Fulfilled Prophecy
 - Quality of the Message
- Verbal Inspiration and Infallibility

Lesson 6: Fulfilled Prophecies

- The evidence of fulfilled prophecies
- 4 key prophecies

Lesson 7: Messianic Prophecies: Evidence of Jesus' Deity

- Definition of Messiah and Messianic Prophecies
- Concepts of the Messiah
- 10 Key messianic prophecies.

Lesson 8: Miracles: Evidence of Jesus' Deity

- Characteristics of a true miracle
- The purpose of miracles in Jesus' ministry
- The 7 miracles in John, and their effects

Lesson 9: The Resurrection: Evidence of the Jesus' Coronation

- Events Surrounding the Resurrection
- Possible Explanations of the Empty Tomb
- Importance of the Resurrection

Lesson 10: The Behavior of the Disciples and the Success of the Early Church

- The Change in Character of the Apostles
- The Spread (and location of origin) of the Early Church
- The Sacrifices of the Early Disciples as evidence of their conviction

Lesson 11: Answering Objections

- Sample Objections (collected from each lesson).

Lesson 12: Dealing with Doubt

- Examples of doubt in Jesus' disciples
- Sources of doubt (usually emotional: causes us to forget the basis of faith)
- Overcoming Doubt

Lesson 13: Review & Quiz

Recommended Reading/Listening/Watching

Books/Authors*

- Miracles, C S Lewis
- Mere Christianity, C S Lewis
- Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Volumes I & II, and “New...” Josh McDowell
- The Case for... Christ, Faith, Creator..., Lee Strobel
- The End of Reason, Ravi Zacharias
- History and Christianity, John Warwick Montgomery
- Escape from Reason, Francis Schaeffer

*Lists of Resources, by topic at: <http://evidenceforchristianity.org/suggested-books/>

Video/Audio

Frank Turek videos (example)

- *Kalam Cosmological Argument* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQwLbDN7amo>

Lee Strobel videos (example)

- *First Cause & Design Arguments* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8wYTTY9Dkw>

Ravi Zacharias videos (example)

- *Ravi at Princeton University* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8wYTTY9Dkw>

William Lane Craig videos (example)

- *Objections to Cosmological Argument* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtfVds8Kn4s>

Mere Christianity, C S Lewis (free audio)

<https://archive.org/details/C.S.LewisMereChristianityReadByRolfVetter>

Boundless.org (go to www.boundless.org and search on the title, e.g. “faith-in-what”):

- *Faith in What?* <http://www.boundless.org/faith/2003/faith-in-what>
- *Proving Things* <http://www.boundless.org/faith/1998/a-skeptical-view-of-christianity>
- *Faith and Searching* <http://www.boundless.org/faith/1999/theophilus-gives-a-speech>

Evidences Lessons Objectives

(At the end of the class, the student should be able to...)

Lesson 1: Understanding Faith

- Define faith, explain how evidence produces faith, and give non-religious examples of how faith in something can be established.
- Give an example of how apparently contradictory facts can be tolerated when the weight of evidence still favors a conclusion.
- Explain the difference between establishing a conviction based on evidence, and accepting the (unprovable) conclusions of one in whom we "have faith".
- List three reasons that a study of evidences is important.

Lesson 2: The Christian's Faith

- List three fundamental elements of the Christian's faith.
- Give the definitions of: Agnostic, Atheist, Deist
- Explain what is meant by these topics, and explain how our convictions are related to the three elements of our faith:
 - *Creation and Nature of Man*: the Genesis Account
 - *Authority of the Bible* (and of Jesus)
 - *The Plan of Salvation* (from the Fall to the Hope of Heaven)

Lesson 3: The Universe -- Evidence of God's Power and Deity

- List at least three possible explanations for the existence of the universe
- Give reasons why each conclusion should be accepted or rejected.
- List the consequences (in the way we view of ourselves and treat others) of accepting each.

Lesson 4: Man's Nature: The Evidence of God's Personality

- Describe man's moral nature, and give examples of how it is manifested.
- Describe other characteristics of man that suggest a spiritual origin.
- Explain how man's nature is evidence of a supernatural origin.

Lesson 5: Looking for Communication from God

- Explain why it is likely that God would communicate with man.
- List and describe at least four things about the Bible that demonstrate that it is from God.
- Explain what is meant by verbal inspiration and infallibility, and show (with scriptural reference) that the Bible claims to be infallibly inspired.

Lesson 6: Fulfilled Prophecies

- Explain how a fulfilled prophecy is evidence of the inspiration of scripture.
- List 4 key messianic prophecies, including verse reference, author and time of writing, and time of fulfillment.

Lesson 7: Messianic Prophecies: Evidence of Jesus' Deity

- Explain what is meant by messianic prophecies (What is a messiah? What did it mean in Jewish history?)
- List 10 Key messianic prophecies, including verse reference, author and time of writing, and how Jesus fulfilled each.

Lesson 8: Miracles - Evidence of Jesus' Deity

- Give at least three characteristics of a true miracle
- Explain the purpose of miracles in Jesus' ministry
- List the 7 miracles in John, and describe their effect on those who witnessed them.

Lesson 9: The Resurrection: Evidence of the Jesus' Coronation

- Describe the events surrounding the resurrection (beatings, death, tomb, soldiers, time in the tomb, discovery of the empty tomb, appearances...)
- List at least three possible explanations of the empty tomb
- Describe at least three consequences if Jesus was not raised, and three significant conclusions one must reach if he was.

Lesson 10: The Behavior of the Disciples and the Success of the Early Church

- Give examples of the change in the character of Jesus' followers after the resurrection.
- Describe the spread of the early church and explain why that would be unlikely to occur in Jerusalem if there had been no resurrection.
- Give examples of what the early disciples were willing to suffer for their faith.

Lesson 11: Answering Objections

- Give answers to questions and objections (collected from each lesson).

Lesson 12: Dealing with Doubt

- List two examples of doubt in Jesus' disciples during His ministry
- List the most common sources of doubt (fear, embarrassment, confusion, disappointment).
- List at least three things a person should do to overcoming doubt.

Lesson 13: Review & Quiz

Lesson 1: Understanding Faith

(Class Period Worksheet)

Memory Verse: Heb 11:6 - *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

Objectives (At the end of the class, the student should be able to...)

- Define faith, explain how evidence produces faith, and give non-religious examples of how faith in something can be established.
- Give an example of how apparently contradictory facts can be tolerated when the weight of evidence still favors a conclusion.
- Explain the difference between establishing a conviction based on evidence, and accepting the (unprovable) conclusions of one in whom we "have faith".
- List three reasons that a study of evidences is important.

A. Take the Pre-Course Test

B. This course is "Evidences of Christianity". How do we use these words (even in non-religious ways)? Write a definition for them.

- Evidence
- Faith
- Doubt

C. Explain why you believe in each of the following (if you do).

1. George Washington was the first president of the United States.
2. Gravity keeps the moon in a circular orbit around the earth.
3. Japan will never conquer the United States.

D. Could you be convinced that one of the above facts is false? What would it take? If you believe something does it make it so? If you doubt something does it make it false? Do you think there are people who doubt some of the above statements?

E. Think of one of someone that you believe is very honest (a friend, parent, church member). List some reasons that you believe that they are honest.

Suppose they told you about an event that you did not witness and cannot verify any other way. Would you believe it? Under what circumstances? Why?

Suppose someone else contradicted their statements. Would you still believe what they had said? Under what circumstances? Why?

F. Give other examples of people or things that we establish confidence in and then are willing to trust, even if we don't see or understand everything we are asked to accept.

G. Why is it important to study the things that the Bible asks (assumes) Christians believe and why we believe them? (see Heb 11:6; James 1:6; I Pet 3:15)

Is it intellectually honest to reject Christianity without an investigation of the evidence for its beliefs?

Lesson 2: The Christian's Faith
(Assignment Worksheet)

- A. Listen to Audio Sermon: “Faith and Knowledge,” sermon by Marty Pickup
<http://www.valricococ.org/media2/sermons/2011/09/25/faith-and-knowledge>

Extra credit! listen to <http://embryhills.com/listen-study/all-sermons/2005/10/14/01-evidence-basis-for-faith>

- B. List at least five things that Christians believe that most non-Christians do not.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
- C. Do all Christians agree on everything they believe? (for example, on the meaning of every Bible verse?) Give examples to explain your answer. Are there some things that all Christians do agree on?

List at least two things.

- C. From Bible verses, list three things that all Christians must believe.
1. Heb 11:6 (and Ps 53:1,2)
 2. II Tim 3:16 (and Acts 13:46)
 3. John 11:25-27 (and II Pet 2:1)
- D. Look up and write down the definitions of these words:
1. Atheist
 2. Agnostic
 3. Deist or Theist
- E. Memorize Ps 19:1

Lesson 2: The Christian's Faith (Class Period Worksheet)

Memory Verse: Ps 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.*

Objectives

- List three fundamental elements of the Christian's faith.
- Give the definitions of: Agnostic, Atheist, Deist
- Explain what is meant by these topics, and explain how our convictions are related to the three elements of our faith:
 - Creation and Nature of Man: the Genesis Account
 - Authority of the Bible (and of Jesus)
 - The Plan of Salvation (from the Fall to the Hope of Heaven)

A. Review and correct the assignment sheet for lesson 2.

B. Consider these three basic beliefs of a Christian:

- God exists.
- The Bible comes from God.
- Jesus is the Son of God.

Are there some people who don't accept any of these three? Are there some that accept only one or two of them, but reject the others? Give examples.

C. Think about which of the three basic beliefs you would decide on first.

D. Think about the opposites of each of the statements above:

- There is no God.
- The Bible is not from God.
- Jesus is not the Son of God.

Can any of these be proved by science or directly seen by any of us? Which of these do the atheist, agnostic, and deist believe? Doesn't it also require faith to accept these conclusions, just as it does to accept what Christians believe? Should these beliefs be defended as well?

E. Discuss whether you agree with each of these statements, and why.

1. Christians believe there is a God because the Bible says it's so.
2. Science can prove that Adam and Eve were the first man & woman.
3. There is lots of evidence in the world around us that there is a heaven and a hell.

F. Explain how these statements are related to the three basic beliefs described above:

1. God created the world, including man, in seven days, and made man sinless, with the opportunity to sin and separate himself from God.
2. God sent His Son to become a man so that man could be forgiven from his sins by baptism in the name of God's Son.
3. All of the Bible must be followed carefully, without adding anything to it or rejecting parts of it.

Lesson 3: The Universe—Evidence of God's Power & Deity
(Assignment Worksheet)

- A. Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8wYTY9Dkw>
What event does it begin by describing?
Is it a theory or a proven fact? List some of the evidence for this theory?
Can it be observed or repeated?
From what point in time does the Big Bang theory begin?
Does it describe any events before that point in time?
- B. From what you know about the sun, what will eventually happen to it?
- Is that also true of all other stars and energy sources in the universe?
- D. List at least five things about the world (from astronomy, physics, biology, chemistry, etc.) that suggest an intelligent designer of these things.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
- E. Memorize Rom 1:20

Lesson 3: The Universe – Evidence of God's Power & Deity
(Class Period Worksheet)

Memory Verse: Rom 1:20 – *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...*

Objectives

- List at least three possible explanations for the existence of the universe
- Give reasons why each conclusion should be accepted or rejected.
- List the consequences (in the way we view of ourselves and treat others) of accepting each.

- A. Review and correct the assignment sheet for lesson 3.
- B. Describe three ways in which the universe may be explained. Can you think of any others?
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- C. Match the following arguments for, and against each possible explanation.

Arguments

- a. The universe shows signs of consistent order and harmony.
- b. The universe is running down, cooling off.
- c. The universe is spreading apart, perhaps from a single point.
- d. A consistent law of nature is that Matter + Energy are always conserved. (That is, something doesn't come from nothing).
- e. Man seems to be more than a merely physical being (and appears to be different from the animals in his behavior and thoughts).

<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Supporting Arguments</i>	<i>Argument Against</i>
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- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- D. What two things does Rom 1:20 say are "clearly seen" in the creation? What do these words mean? Explain how they are "seen" in the universe.
- E. Does the Solar System look old? Why? Imagine that the sun, earth, planets, and stars were created all at once. Would they "look" old right away? Explain.

Lesson 4: Man's Nature - Evidence of God's Personality
(Assignment Worksheet)

- A. List at least three things that make you feel guilty.
- B. Read/Listen to Mere Christianity, chapter 1: *The meaning of the Universe* (51:28)
<https://archive.org/details/C.S.LewisMereChristianityReadByRolfVetter>
- B. Can you think of a criminal that was guilty, but not punished? How do you feel about that person? [perhaps a specific current event could be used here - mmb]
- C. List three emotions and abilities unique to humans (that is, animals do not share).
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- D. List several actions that are illegal in almost every country in the world. Why do you think there is such a consistency between these laws?
- E. Does the Bible suggest that there are some things that humans should know to be wrong, even without the Bible to tell them? (see Rom 1:26; I Cor 5:1)
- F. If one chooses any alternative other than a supernatural creator, what is the only explanation for man's existence? Can man (or thought) be any more than a physical body?

If you did not believe in a supernatural creator, what reasons could you give to behave in a kind way to a disadvantaged or elderly person? What does Rom 1:24, 26, 28 say will happen to those who ignore the evidence of God in the universe? How does "God give people up" to this kind of behavior?

- G. Memorize Ps 139:14 –

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.*

Lesson 4: Man's Nature - Evidence of God's Personality
(Class Period Worksheet)

Memory Verse: Ps 139:14 – *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.*

Objectives

- Describe man's moral nature, and give examples of how it is manifested.
- Describe other characteristics of man that suggest a spiritual origin.
- Explain how man's nature is evidence of a supernatural origin.

- A. Review and correct the assignment sheet for lesson 4.
- B. Suppose a device were discovered which had the following characteristics:
- It was made of a very rare (and not-found-in-nature) alloy of metals.
 - It was carefully and accurately cut and fitted together, using extremely small pieces in a complicated way.
 - It had instructions for use inscribed on it in Chinese.
 - It broke when exposed to very cold temperatures.

Describe likely characteristics of the device's inventor (or builder).

- C. What have we already seen about the earth and the universe that reflects the character of its creator (Remember Rom 1:26)?

What part of that creation do we know the most about? (see Ps 139:13,14)

- D. What is meant by "man's moral nature"?

Give examples of situations in which you or others show their moral nature.

Just because we believe something is right to do, do we always do it?

Just because we believe something is wrong to do, do we always not do it?

- E. What are typical explanations for the uniqueness of humans in believing and acting as if there is a right and wrong?

- F. What are examples, besides guilt, of unique emotions and/or aspirations of humans?

Do these have to do with "spiritual" thoughts and hopes?

How pervasive is a belief in God or gods throughout history and around the world? (see Acts 17:22-28, and especially vs 27)

What non-spiritual explanations are given for these "spiritual" characteristics of man?

- G. Man's nature (even as we observe it in ourselves) is part of the world whose origin must be explained by whatever theory of beginnings we chose. Which of the three explanations (see Lesson 3) are the most reasonable to explain man's moral nature.

- H. Make the argument of this lesson in your own words to an imaginary acquaintance who believes in the "Spontaneous Origin" of the Universe.

Lesson 5: Looking for Communication from God (Assignment Worksheet)

A. Listen to/watch the video:

<https://livestream.com/Vestaviachurchofchrist/events/5808395/videos/129681004>

B. In previous lessons, we looked at evidence supporting the belief that God created us and our world. List two reasons why God might communicate with the beings He created.

- 1.
- 2.

B. Suppose you had never heard of the Bible or other revelation from God, but you were convinced that an intelligent being (like us, but superior) had created mankind and the universe. What questions would you ask the Creator of the Universe if you had the chance? (List at least three.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Does the Bible answer any of your question?

If so, which? (Give scripture references for the Bible answers to your questions.)

C. Write a definition of the "*inspiration*" in your own words.

Read II Sam 23:2 and Acts 1:16. Do these scriptures fit your definition? Now read I Cor 2:13. When the Bible writers were *inspired* by the Spirit of God, did they choose their own words or were they guided to write the actual thoughts and words of God?

D. Look up these words in a dictionary:

infallibility

revelation

Based on the above information about *inspiration*, *infallibility*, and *revelation*:

1. Which came from a Greek word that means "an uncovering or unveiling"?
2. Which means a supernatural influence exerted on a writer by the Spirit of God?
3. Which means "not capable of error; un failing, certain to succeed".
4. Which expresses the idea that God made known to us things we couldn't have discovered for ourselves?
5. Which word describes *how* God shared His thoughts with us through human writers?

E. Does it have a central story or theme from beginning to end?
What is the Bible about? (write in your own words)

F. Memorize II Tim 3:16-17.

Lesson 5: Looking for Communication from God (Class Period Worksheet)

Memory Verse: II Tim 3:16-17 – *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Objectives

- Explain why it is likely that God would communicate with man.
 - List and describe at least 4 things about the Bible that demonstrate that it is from God.
 - Explain what is meant by verbal inspiration and infallibility, and show (with scriptural reference) that the Bible claims to be infallibly inspired.
- A. If a Creator demonstrated His power and deity in creating man the ability to communicate with other men. Would it be impossible for Him to communicate with his created beings? Based on what we know of man's nature, is it likely that He would communicate with us?

- B. Read 1) I Pet 1:25; 2) Heb 6:18; 3) Jer 1:9 . Which of these three verses states that:
 _____ God's word will last forever _____ God put His words in the mouths
 _____ God cannot lie? of His servants?

Does the Bible claim to be infallibly inspired (that is, it is from God and is always true)?

- C. Does the Bible claim to tell us things that happened in the past? If the Bible is from God, would you expect that the people, places, and events written about really existed? Does this historical accuracy prove that the Bible is inspired?

The Bible account lists places, people, and civilizations that for a while were not known, but were later discovered (for example the Hittite nation). These references do not prove inspiration, but they increase our confidence in the accuracy of the accounts. How do these help with references to people and places archaeology has not yet discovered?

- D. The Bible is not a science book, and it is written in non-scientific, but several texts indicate a knowledge of science not known by men at the time, such as hygienic practices in the Law of Moses to prevent the spread of disease (e.g. Lev 13:45,46). Also, there are no unhealthy practices or silly beliefs (such as "bleeding" sick) common in other civilizations.
- E. How many men wrote the Bible? Over how many years was it written? How many different languages were used? Does it seem likely that so many men, at different times and places, could have created a book with such unity?

- F. Match the name of the evidence with the statements on the right.

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| 1. Fulfilled Prophecy | _____ | Even as Archeology discovers new information, no discoveries create major conflict with the Bible. |
| 2. Scientific Accuracy | _____ | The Bible, written by 40 men from many places, over 1500 years, has a complete, harmonious message. |
| 3. Historical Accuracy | _____ | Many Bible predictions, written hundreds of years before the events they predict, have come true. |
| 4. Unity | _____ | There are more ancient and growing numbers of copies of Bible texts than any similar writings. |
| 5. Survival (Integrity) | _____ | Despite attempts to destroy or limit its availability, the Bible is the most widely circulated book of all time. |
| 6. Survival (Distribution) | _____ | Much of what is written in the Bible about nature, health, and the earth is scientifically accurate. |
| 7. Quality of the Message | _____ | The Bible instructions, when followed, are superior to any other religion or philosophy. |