In the video, Sean McDowell recounts a recent interaction with a car salesperson, who described Christian philosophy and theology as subjects where "everybody has an opinion, but nobody has the truth, nobody has knowledge."

- Think back to your own experience. Can you recall a time when you heard someone—or maybe even yourself—describe faith this way?

- What was meant in describing faith this way?

- In your experience, how common is this view of faith?

McDowell defines “blind faith” as the idea of believing something not only despite but maybe even against the evidence.

- Why does it matter that faith is not “blind”? In other words, what is at stake, or what do we lose if we conceive of faith as something that is “blind”?

- Take time to write down your definition of faith.

- What biblical passages should you use to form and support it?
SESSION 1

IS FAITH IRRATIONAL?

(continued)

• What ideas are non-negotiable and essential to include in a proper definition of faith?

McDowell asserts that Christianity advocates for “intelligent faith” and calls us to “believe intelligently.”

• In what ways is “intelligent” a good descriptor of faith?

• How could this language also be misunderstood or misapplied?

What hurdles might occur in our interactions with nonbelievers if they or we conceive of faith as something “blind”? What barriers might this create in our attempt to persuade them of the gospel?

• What are some ways we can overcome or eliminate these barriers?
As McDowell says, admittedly, science does show that when people die, they naturally stay dead.

- How then does science not rule out the possibility of miracles like the resurrection?

In this video, McDowell asserts that belief in the possibility of miracles is not a matter of science (observation) but worldview (e.g., naturalism vs. theism). He tells us the story about the General Noble sequoia tree that was so massive people thought it was a hoax. Why? Their expectations and assumptions about reality (worldview) excluded it from even being considered possible. No evidence could convince them of the contrary.

- Similarly, how does one’s worldview impact their view of the possibility of miracles?

In Acts 26:8, when Paul gives witness to the resurrected Christ before King Agrippa and Festus, he proclaims, “Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?”

- What is the logic of Paul’s argument? What are the assumptions that allow him to make this statement?

- If Paul were alive today, how do you imagine he would respond to today’s skeptics who question Christ’s resurrection?

McDowell argues that Christian beliefs provide a basis for science, while atheism and naturalism actually undermine it.

- How does atheistic naturalism—the view that God does not exist, and therefore everything arises from merely natural occurrences—undermine science?
• How does Christianity provide a basis for science? In other words, if Christianity wasn’t true, could science still exist?

What is one argument, idea, or statement from the video that you want to remember to help you communicate winsomely with nonbelievers about faith and science?
McDowell outlines three arguments for God’s existence. Which do you find most convincing and faith-building?

- Which do you think would be most effective with nonbelievers today?

- Which might be most objectionable? Why?

Look up Psalm 19:1–6 and Romans 1:19–21. If you were to express the message of each passage as an argument for the existence of God, how would you capture what each passage is saying?

According to the cosmological argument, the existence of creation demands the existence of a Creator. The universe began to exist; whatever begins to exist has a cause (i.e., God).

- However, how would you respond to someone who objects to the premise that the universe began to exist? Could the natural universe simply be eternal?

- How would you respond to someone who holds that the universe, while it had a beginning, was caused by the big bang instead of a Creator?
The second argument McDowell provides us is the argument from fine-tuning or design: if there is design, there must be a designer.

- If you were to give an example of one obvious design in the universe, what would you point to? What do you think might be most compelling?

If you were to make an argument against the argument from design or fine-tuning, what would it be? What do you think could be a perceived weakness in this argument?

- Now, how would you answer your own objection?
Christians believe that humans are both body and soul—that is, they consist of both material and immaterial substance. (See Ecc 12:7; Matt 10:28; 2 Cor 7:1; Heb 12:23; Jas 2:26; Rev 6:9.)

- What do we mean when we speak of the soul?

- How does it relate to the body?

McDowell recounts a story in which a young Christian college student was derided for her belief in the soul.

- What assumptions and outlooks prevalent within society today make believing in the soul seem implausible to so many? How have you maybe experienced a similar sort of opposition to the idea of the soul?

- If you have experienced similar opposition to the idea of the soul, describe it.

McDowell gives three evidences or arguments for the existence of the soul.

- Which do you find most persuasive? What in your view makes this argument so strong?

- Which do you find least convincing? Why do you find this argument less persuasive?
In your own words, describe McDowell’s third argument, “Leibniz’s Law of the Indiscernibility of Individuals.” Incorporate your own illustration.

McDowell closes by reflecting on the practical significance of believing that we are both body and soul.

- As you reflect on your own life, what pitfalls can we fall into if we fail to believe and account for the fact that we are embodied souls (both body and soul)? What are two ways you might live differently if you knew you didn’t have a soul?

- In what way are you most tempted to live as if you didn’t have a soul?
Based on the laws God gave for slavery, how would you characterize slavery in the Old Testament?

- How were these laws different from the typical expressions of slavery you would have found in the surrounding ancient world?

What are some possible misunderstandings, or likely misconceptions, individuals today might have about the practice of slavery in the Bible?

- What are ways we can persuasively communicate the differences between Old Testament slavery and other more recent examples of slavery in human history?


- Consider how the inclusion of slaves in the early church would have served as a powerful testimony to Christianity's view of slaves, the place of slaves in the people of God, and the nature of the gospel itself.

- What do you think a bystander might have said about these Christians who included slaves as full members of their community?
• How might the church’s inclusion of slaves even have served as an implicit challenge to its surrounding social order?

Read Philemon 8–21. Based on this passage, as well as others we’ve read, how would you answer the question, “Did God intend for us to keep slaves?”

At the beginning of this video segment, McDowell stated, “An atheist can know right and wrong, but they can’t give us an account of objective moral values and duties.”

• What does this mean? Does the atheist have a basis for making moral objections against the Bible?

• How might this observation provide a strong argument against such moral objections to the Bible, like in this case with slavery?
Many today claim that morality is relative and subjective. In other words, there’s no transcendent, universal, objective standard that determines absolute right and wrong. Rather, morality is something merely socially constructed.

- In what ways does our society live consistent with this claim to moral relativity?

- Are there any ways in which you see society failing to live consistently with its claim to moral relativity?

What’s wrong with saying morality is relative? Why is that an inadequate position?

Provide two common ways one might explain the origin and basis of morality from outside a Christian worldview.

- What do you think would be the strongest, most plausible way to explain and provide a basis for morality outside of Christianity?

- What is insufficient or problematic about each of these explanations?
McDowell presented the following argument:
- If objective moral values and duties exist, God must exist.
- Objective moral values and duties do exist.
- Therefore God exists.

• In what ways would you anticipate a nonbeliever or skeptic objecting to this argument?

• How might you respond to those objections?

We live in a broken world. And as McDowell reflected, we experience a deep, inescapable longing for justice and for things to be made right. Furthermore, when we ourselves do wrong, we sense our guilt.

• How might we use and appeal to these impulses to commend the gospel in our conversations with nonbelievers?
Look up and read the following passages: Daniel 12:2; Matthew 10:28; 13:47–50; 18:8–9; 25:41–46; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10; and Revelation 20:11–15.

- According to these verses, what is hell (the final destiny of those who reject Christ)? How would you define it?

In your experience, what are the top two reasons nonbelievers struggle with or object to the notion of hell?

- What would be some of the key points you would want to communicate to a nonbeliever struggling with or objecting to the notion of hell?

Examine the following two quotes from McDowell’s video.

“Modern people inevitably think hell works like this: God gives us time, but if we haven’t made the right choices by the end of our lives, he casts our souls into hell for all eternity. As the poor souls fall through space, they cry out for mercy, but God says, ‘Too late! You had your chance! Now you will suffer!’ This caricature misunderstands the very nature of evil. The biblical picture is that sin separates us from the presence of God, which is the source of all joy and indeed of all love, wisdom, or good things of any sort. Since we were originally created for God’s immediate presence, only before his face will we thrive, flourish and achieve our highest potential. To lose his presence totally, that would be hell, the loss of our capability for giving or receiving love or joy.” —Timothy Keller

“There are only two kinds of people in the end; those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in hell choose it.” —C. S. Lewis

- What do you find helpful about these explanations of hell?
• What, if anything, might be unhelpful or possibly misleading about these explanations?

What are two uncomfortable or distressing truths that would result if hell wasn’t real?

What would happen to the message of the gospel if we were to reject the reality of hell? Provide at least three ways this would change, detract, or undermine the Christian gospel.
We’ve talked much about the case for God. Let’s look now specifically at the case for Christ and the Christian God in particular.

• McDowell presented many arguments for Christ. In your view, what most commends Christ as uniquely true amidst so many other competing religions today?

• What arguments do you think nonbelievers will find most compelling?

McDowell noted Christ’s claim to be God (John 8:58; cf. Exod 3:14). Read the quote below from C. S. Lewis, and answer the question that follows.

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”
—C. S. Lewis

Reflecting on this argument, why is it so implausible that Christ’s claim to be God would be false?

Name three things that would no longer hold true if, in fact, Christ had not risen from the dead.

What is one thing you plan on doing as a result of what you’ve learned in this study?
• Who is one person you might encourage in their faith using this material?

• Who is one person you might encourage toward faith in Christ using this material?

Name at least three ways your own faith has been built up by this video series.

• How have you been challenged to live or think differently as a result of the material in this study?


2 John Stott continues this line of thought:

“Was he [Jesus] then a deliberate impostor? Did he attempt to gain the adherence of men to his views by assuming a divine authority he did not possess? This is very difficult to believe. There is something guileless about Jesus. He hated hypocrisy in others and was transparently sincere himself.

Was he sincerely mistaken then? Had he a fixed delusion about himself? … Jesus does not give the impression of that abnormality which one expects to find in the deluded. His character appears to support his claims.”

John Stott, Basic Christianity (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2002), 34.
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