

# The Source Of Life



Conversations about the existence of God and the  
reliability of the New Testament

Jesse Jost



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## Introduction

*Hi. My name is Skip Tecke. Three years ago I had a conversation that ruined my life. I was leaving the studio after finishing my (once very popular) call-in show. A small bald man approached me – said his name was Paul. We ended up talking for several hours. That night Paul really shook my little world. He got me thinking about the afterlife and about Jesus Christ. I had never in my whole life heard such powerful evidence for the foundation of Christianity. When I got home that night, I had several beers and watched an old Robin Williams' flick, trying to drown out what I had heard. I wanted no part of Jesus or the hypocritical, stuck-up, gullible little club He started. Besides, I'm an atheist to the core. At least I was... I'm afraid I'm backsliding.*

Anyway, the next morning I tried to forget about Paul and the whole miserable experience. There is no God, I reasoned, so a resurrection is absurd, and Jesus certainly isn't God. But the harder I tried to refute Paul's arguments, the more I realized their strength. When refuting became futile, I tried ignoring them. That worked for a bit. But try as I did, I couldn't get away from some of the things Paul said. My mental gyrations began to affect performance on the air. I lost my cocky, irreverent edge that had always been my trademark. My ratings plummeted. I wasn't edgy enough for my secular fans, but was still far too liberal for conservative ears. Let's just say I wasn't making friends with anyone.

You need to know something about me. For most of my life, I've been able to block out the fact that I'm mortal and that, someday, I too will die. Hey, I was pretty good at it – until Paul talked to me. To ease my abused conscience, I'd assumed that my existence would end at the grave, but Paul's evidence for the resurrection of Christ carried far more weight than I wanted it to. I was haunted by what might befall me if Jesus really was God and spoke the truth about heaven and hell. I still shudder to think about what will happen when I die.

I've been clinging to my atheism with white knuckles, even though it's hard to live with sometimes. There are days when I feel this burst of happiness and gratitude about life, and I want to thank someone for all this, but I know there is no one to thank. And then other times, like last week when we had the funeral for my brother's little girl who was killed by a drunk driver, I am furious this world isn't run like it should be. Then I have to stifle that feeling, because there is no one to get mad at. Honestly, I'm having doubts about my atheism.

Then life got worse. I'd just been told that when my contract with JYRK ends next month, the radio station board has decided to let me go. The once mighty Skip Tecke has been reduced to a jobless shock-jock. Only one way to deal with a blow like that...I was walking to the local pub to drink myself into oblivion when I spotted an old drinking buddy reading on a bench across the street...

# Chapter 1

“Hey, Frank! Buddy, you want to go get a drink with me?”

Frank looked up from his book, “Skip? I haven’t seen you in years! Come on over.”

I noted suspiciously that the book in Frank’s hands was a Bible. *That* shocked the living daylights out of me, but I tried to act nonchalant. “What’s up, guy?”

“Oh, not much. Just trying to de-stress after another tough case at the courthouse.” Frank was the county judge and well known for pushing a liberal agenda – although I realized I hadn’t heard much about him in the news lately.

“Sounds like you need a cold one, too – or ten. How about it?”

“Actually, Skip, since I became a Christian, I don’t go near the drink. I’m not trying to get preachy; I just am too weak to handle the stuff.”

Now I was really shocked. Frank Shaw... a *Christian*? Any time a Christian would call into my show with a half-decent line of reasoning, I used to call up Frank for moral support and a good deathblow argument. Frank’s got a keen mind and an even keener ability to see through a weak argument, which is what makes him such a great judge.

“You *are* kidding, right, Frank? There is no way you could have become a Jesus freak. I can’t believe you of all people would kiss your brains goodbye. Are you on marijuana or something?”

“No, I’m serious, Skip. I’m a Christian and I haven’t kissed my brains goodbye. In fact, that was one of the key reasons I became a Christian. I saw that for me to remain atheistic and antagonistic to Christ I would have to lose my intellectual integrity.”

My hackles rose. “Okay, that’s really harsh!”

Frank raised his hand in a truce gesture. “Hold on and let me explain. When I really sat down – have a seat, by the way – and wrestled with the evidence, I found it’s far more reasonable to believe there’s a God who created us than to believe that we’re the result of a cosmic accident.”

I settled down heavily on the bench. “But all your colleagues and the elite in society reject the idea of a personal God.”

“If I based my beliefs on what my peers believed rather than on what I saw to be true, I would be committing intellectual suicide. I have always tried to follow what I knew to be true, even when it made me uncomfortable.”

“That’s why I’m so shocked by your decision. How’d it happen?”

“Well, three years ago, I met a strange man named Paul.” Outwardly, I nodded interestedly, but inside questions were clamoring for answers. Could this be the same –? Naw. Impossible.

“...He simply challenged each one of my objections,” Frank went on, “and gave me compelling evidence that was too overwhelming

to ignore.”

The words pushed themselves out before I could stop them, “To tell you the truth, my own beliefs on this whole God-issue are floundering right now. Be great to talk to you more about this sometime.” I wished I could take it back the minute I said it.

“Hey, how about right now? Let’s go to my place for supper. Car’s parked right over there on the corner.” I hesitated. Frank pressed me, “I don’t have any beer, but I could find something cold and sweet in the fridge. And I can make a mean stir fry.”

I didn’t know where this conversation was going to land me. But I squeezed into the little passenger seat of Frank’s PT Cruiser and off we went.

Half an hour later, we were drinking coke on Frank’s deck, and I was trying not to look like I had a thousand questions needing answers.

### **Can you prove God with 100% certainty?**

“So, Frank. You’ve always contended that it’s impossible to prove there’s a God. What changed your mind?”

“Yes, I claimed that until someone could prove God’s existence with one hundred percent certainty, I’d be justified in my atheism. But Paul pointed out that I was being inconsistent.”

“Huh?”

“There are very few things we can prove with one hundred percent certainty, yet we confidently believe them anyway. I can’t prove that the sun will rise tomorrow, yet I confidently believe it will.”

“Well, of course. Believing that it won’t rise would go against all the evidence.” I took another swallow of coke.

“But my point is that no one can prove it with total certainty, yet it’s far more reasonable to believe that it will rise, then that it won’t. Paul asked me to do the same thing with God: Look at the evidence and consider whether it’s more reasonable to believe that there is a God or that all we see came from nothing – or at the very least, a cosmic accident? So I agreed. Oh, and somewhere in this revelation from Paul, I also realized that I was being a hypocrite.”

“Strong words, Frank – intellectual *suicide* and *hypocrisy*?”

“See, I believed there was no God, a position I knew I couldn’t prove conclusively, yet I demanded conclusive proof before I would believe in God.”

### **There is no evidence for God**

Finishing off my coke, I armored myself with bravado. “I don’t know what happened to you, but I *know* there is no God. I don’t see any evidence for him.”

Frank just smiled warmly. “Skip, let me ask you something. Of all the knowledge and information in the world, what percentage do you know? I’m talking about number of stars in the universe, names and experience of every person who’s ever lived, all the words that are written in all the books



that have ever been published, and so on. How much do you know?"

"Ooohhh...uh, five percent? I don't know. Haven't considered it before."

"Wow. Albert Einstein only thought he knew *half* of one percent. Then again, you've spent your life listening to enlightened callers so you've got to be least four times as smart as Einstein." Frank laughed and slapped me on the back. "That means you've got two percent of all knowledge. But let me ask you: Is it possible that somewhere in that ninety-eight percent of knowledge you don't have, there's good evidence for the existence of God?"

"Well, maybe. But the sword cuts both ways. How do *you* know for sure that in this ninety-eight percentage there isn't conclusive proof that there isn't a God?"

"It's much easier to prove the existence of something, than it is to try and prove that something does not exist. For me to claim there's no gold in the United States, I'd have to know what's in every nook and cranny of the States, in every dresser and pocket, every vault, safe, and human tooth. *But* if I just see one small gold nugget in Montana, say, I can argue with confidence that there is gold in the U.S. In the same way, if I find compelling proof for God, I'm justified in believing even though I have less than one percent of all knowledge."

"So are you saying you want me to believe in leprechauns and unicorns, too, because there could be evidence of them in that ninety-eight percent of knowledge?"

"No. I don't believe in those things because I don't see evidence for them. We don't have credible testimonies of sober people who see unicorns, but we have millions of credible testimonies of sane, sober people who have had an encounter with God."

"But maybe somewhere in the ninety-eight percent of knowledge there's evidence proving that all these experiences were just psychological phenomena having no corresponding link with a real God."

"I'll concede that. I'm more than aware of how little I know and how wrong I could be. I'm simply asking you to listen to the evidence and honestly ask which is more reasonable. That God exists? Or that we all came from nothing caused by nothing?"

### **Since we know so little, why not remain agnostic?**

Frank was already wearing on my thin defenses, but I wasn't going to let him know that just yet. "You've admitted you can't prove conclusively that God does exist, and I already know that it's impossible to prove that God doesn't exist, so why can't I just remain agnostic?"

"To remain agnostic is to choose against the existence of God. You might as well be an atheist. And I think that atheism, if followed to its logical conclusion, is a belief system with painful consequences. In fact, if there is no God there is no real meaning, value, or purpose to life."

*That* hit a nerve. I'd gotten that argument from self-righteous

bigots who called into my show. “I’m really surprised to hear you buying into what I think is one of the biggest fallacies of religious thought. I don’t see how people can say that there is no meaning or purpose if there is no God. I’ve been an atheist since I was fifteen and my life has had plenty of meaning and purpose.”

“I agree that you can believe that there is no God and still feel like you have meaning and purpose. If there really is a God, there will be real meaning and purpose in this life, even if we don’t acknowledge the source of it. I was in that position myself for many years. But to clarify what I said, if there is no God there is no *real* meaning and purpose. Without God and the immortality He gives, all meaning and purpose are an illusion – a grand lie to keep us sane.”

“Explain,” I said in a tone dripping skepticism.

“Without a God, this universe and our existence is simply the result of blind natural chance and we’re just some random side-effects of a cosmic accident. This universe came from nothing and is slowly and surely marching to a gradual death and a return to nothing. In between these bookends of oblivion there’s no real meaning to life. Humanity is headed for death, so ultimately it doesn’t matter if we cure cancer or annihilate another nation. Without God there is no objective meaning.”

Frank’s diagnosis gave me a chilling, desolate feeling. “But *I* have meaning and *I* don’t think there is a God. I’m just not getting your point.”

He replied, “Just because a human assigns meaning to the universe doesn’t mean the universe has any objective meaning. What if I assign a different meaning? Who is right? Neither. Without God there is no objective meaning.”

“I don’t know, Frank. Meaning is such a vague word and I’m not sure I need objective or ultimate meaning to be happy. Why does it matter if the sense of meaning I feel is false as long as it makes me happy?”

“Because in the long run the meaning must be real to truly make us happy. Mind another example? Picking up sticks seems meaningless, right? But let’s suppose a man offers to pay you a dime for every stick you pick up. Now this job has meaning, so even though it’s hot and you hate this job you do it because you need money. Now suppose this man comes back a couple hours later and you ask him for your money and he just laughs, says he was joking...how would you feel? Because the man lied to you, the meaning the job had was false. Would you have picked up the sticks if you knew the meaning was false?”

“I think the answer’s pretty obvious.”

“But you just said that what was important was a sense of meaning even if it was false.”

“Yeah, okay, you’re right. I was wrong. What’s your point?”

“If there’s no God, life has no ultimate purpose or value. Let me explain. We all want to live a good life; this means we think that there is a way to live this life that is better than other ways. But if there is no God

there is no ultimate person to say conclusively which lifestyle is better. You like to save people. Another man likes to kill people – who is to say who is right?”

I started to protest but Frank kept going, “Skip, I’m not arguing for the existence of God or morality or meaning. I’m simply pointing out that without God life is ultimately bleak, depressing, empty and devoid of purpose – merely a fluke existence sandwiched between endless oblivions.”

That chilling desolation filled me again – was this really what I believed? Had to be. It was the logical conclusion of my beliefs. Frank had made *that* much clear.

Unaware of my thoughts, Frank downed the last of his coke and then looked me in the eye. “Skip, if the evidence for and against God’s existence were even, you’d be wise to choose to believe in God and live as if He existed. Like Pascal’s famous wager: If you bet on the possibility that God exists, and live accordingly, this will lend meaning, morality, and purpose to your life and afterward, if He does exist, you’ll have life eternal. But you’ve lost nothing if you find out in the end that He never existed. Your existence was in no way diminished by your belief. If anything, your life was enhanced.”

“So a bet for God is a win/win situation,” Frank said. “But a bet against Him is a lose/lose proposition, because in deciding there is no God you lose objective meaning and purpose in this life, and ‘gain’ oblivion after death. But if you bet against Him and He does exist, you risk His condemnation.”

“You know, I’ve thought about that wager but it doesn’t work for me. If I have to give up women and partying, and spend my life doing stuffy church stuff, I’d have lost a lot in this life. And how would I know which God to bet on – the God of Islam or Hinduism?” Frank opened his mouth, but I plowed ahead, “Plus, even if there is a God, I think He would understand my just wanting to have a fun time. I don’t think I have any condemnation to worry about.”

Frank threw back his head and laughed. “Wow, Skip! You just went from being an agnostic to an opinionated theologian. How did you go from saying there was no evidence for God to suddenly knowing how He would treat you? What proof do you have that God doesn’t care how we live?”

My conversation with Paul came to mind. I had dismissed Paul’s claims about Jesus being God by rejecting God’s existence altogether: Jesus can’t be God if there is no God. But if Paul and Frank were right – *if* there is a God, and that’s a big IF – Jesus is that God in the flesh, and He warned repeatedly of the consequences we would face in the next life if we rejected God. Frank’s mention of the wager didn’t inspire me to bet on the spot, but it reminded me that this was truly a high stakes issue.

“Well, do *you* have evidence for God’s existence?” I asked.

“Yes, and I would be happy to share it with you over supper,” Frank answered, “I can’t think on an empty stomach any longer.”

Frank served up his “mean stir fry” – La Choy out of a can – with a fresh salad. We made small talk about the latest cases Frank’s been handling, but my mind was more on the God question. I tried to be casual in bringing it up, though.

“Sounds like the odds of your current case are stacked against you. Where this evidence for God’s existence is concerned, I mean. Give me what you got.”

“Before I give it to you, Skip, I have to ask you a question.”

“Fire away.” I shoveled in a forkful of baby corn and beef chunks.

**Are you going to be open to the evidence or is your mind already made up?**

“Skip, are you really open to this God issue, or have you already made up your mind that there is no God, even before I give you the evidence? See, I’ve found that the evidence for God is more than rational and compelling, but we humans do not make decisions solely with our intellects. There are several factors that contribute to our beliefs. Often our desires and emotions override the intellect and we choose to sacrifice rationality instead of going against our desires.”

“How?” I asked.

“I was an alcoholic for many years. My intellect knew that it was destroying my marriage. I knew that each time I got drunk I hurt my family. But because my desires for drink were so strong, they overrode my intellect. I lied to myself that it wasn’t hurting anyone – sacrificed my rationality for drink, so to speak. I’ve seen smokers do the same thing. Because their desire to smoke is so strong, they refuse the evidence that smoking can kill them.”

“Okay, I get that, but what does this have to do with the God issue?”

“Besides being a drinker, I was an atheist for many years. I didn’t want there to be a God, because that would mean I was accountable to someone bigger than me. A God meant demands on my life and I wanted no part of that. And if God was real I knew I would have to face him after death and that thought scared me. So I set my will against the possibility of His existence. I became selective with the evidence that I looked at. I didn’t honestly consider. I’d challenge people to prove to me that there was a God, but it wasn’t a fair challenge, because no amount of evidence would change my mind. The problem wasn’t with the evidence. It was with me. I was willfully blind.”

I sat there in silence, staring at the sweet and sour sauce congealing on my plate. Frank’s description fit me to a tee. His honesty was pricking my newly reacquainted conscience.

I hated to ask it, but I had to. “What changed you?”

“Well, I remember I had a long conversation with a Mormon friend. I drove home so frustrated, because no matter what evidence I showed him proving that Joseph Smith was a false prophet and that the Book of Mormon had serious flaws, my friend continued to cling blindly to his beliefs. ‘If only he’d just look at the evidence with an open mind, he’d see how wrong he is!’ I thought. ‘It’s so stupid to cling to blind belief.’”

“I know how you feel,” I said, “I cringe when Mormons call into my show. You just can’t reason with them.”

“Anyway, I had this startling thought – almost as if there was someone else in the car saying to me, ‘Frank, you’re sure one to talk! You refuse to look at the evidence for God because your mind is already made up.’ I got mad! The very idea that I, Frank Shaw, one of the most respected minds in the legal community, was being close-minded was outrageous. To prove that voice wrong, I decided that if I was going to be an atheist, I would be an honest one and look at the evidence with an open mind, following it wherever it led. What I found was that there is more than enough to persuade a reasonable man that there is a God.”

“Well, can you just give me the evidence and let me be the judge of whether or not it is compelling?”

“Let me finish my point. If you are willing to look at this issue with an open mind, I’ll be happy to show you some compelling evidences for God. But if your mind is made up, I am wasting my time because no amount of reason can change a mind that is closed to reason. Are you really going to look at this with an open mind?”

I thought about it for a minute.

**I have to know the truth: *Is there a God?***

“Frank, if you’d brought up this issue with me a few years ago I would have been closed to reason. I’d have feigned open-mindedness but no amount of evidence would have convinced me. But I know now that I can’t afford to be biased on this issue. I *have* to know the truth. Is there really a God? I will look at this with an open mind, but I warn you, I’ll seriously question the reasons you give me. I am not going to trade one blind faith for another, and honestly, there still is a part of me that doesn’t want there to be a God.”

“I understand completely,” Frank responded, “It’s like when you go to the doctor because you suspect you have cancer. Though you don’t want to accept the possibility of cancer, you know that if you’ve got it, you have to deal with it. Far better to admit you have cancer and undergo treatment than to deny it and face a slow, painful death. So it is with God. If there is a God, better to come to grips with it and seek His grace, than to deny His existence and face the consequences.” Frank stood up. “Let me just clear the table, and then we can look more closely at this God question.”

## Chapter 2

A few minutes later we were back out on the deck. The setting sun was casting a bronze hue over the backyard aspens. The cool breeze kept the bugs away and flowed refreshingly over us. We both just sat there quietly soaking it up. For a moment I wanted to shut my brain off and just enjoy this incredible evening. But the questions wouldn't leave me alone. "Care to expound now?" I asked Frank, getting the feeling that by asking this, I was shouting down an avalanche on myself. Was my atheism about to be buried?

### **This world: the product of blind chance or design?**

"All right. To begin with, I think we need to look at the world around us and ask if this world is the product of blind, random chance, or of an intelligent, personal designer. The principles that I want to show here are quite simple and intuitive. Things that begin to exist must have a cause. And no effect can be greater than its cause. The key to determine whether God exists is to examine the world and our experiences and discover what kind of cause is responsible. Is what we see around us caused by impersonal random forces, or does this world bear the marks of an intelligent designer?"

I've dabbled in scientific studies on the side, and I love watching the Discovery Channel, so I was pretty sure I already knew the answer if Frank was going to try to prove this God thing scientifically. I popped off a cocky objection, "Frank, the general consensus is that this world has evolved through natural means over the course of a few billion years, so that pretty much rules out a personal cause."

"Not so fast. I used to think that myself until I really looked into the evidence. There are several serious problems with the current naturalistic explanations of how we came here."

"But evolutionary theory is entrenched! A majority of scientists hold to it. Evolution is simply a proven fact."

"Actually, it isn't. As more and more discoveries are made in the fields of molecular biology and cosmology, naturalistic explanations are wearing extremely thin and in many cases are being shown to be downright impossible."

"Well, if this is the case, why don't more scientists believe in God?"

### **Is belief in God the death of science?**

"A number of prominent scientists do. And belief in an intelligent designer has become more acceptable in the scientific community. But in answer to your question, there is a prevailing philosophy among many scientists that insists on allowing only naturalistic or material causes. Supernatural causes and the God possibility are ruled out before they are given a chance. Current theories about evolution have been shot full of holes but are still being taught because no one has been able to come up

with a better naturalistic theory.”

“I understand *that* reasoning because a supernatural explanation would be the death of science! I mean, really...every time you came upon a mystery, you’d just throw up your hands and say, ‘God did it!’”

“Hardly. Belief in a rational God who created the world with order and precision actually led to great scientific discoveries. In polytheistic and pantheistic cultures, scientific discoveries were squelched because people believed the gods were capricious. Scientific exploration is based on the presumption that there is uniformity and order and *consistency* in the universe. Without a God, there’s no reason to believe in this consistency.”

“Wait,” I interrupted, “are you saying that science is in itself proof for God?”

“Not necessarily, just that belief in God does not need to hinder the exploration of science. A philosophy that rules out belief in God can lead to bad science. There isn’t anything in science that can prove there is no God. Many scientists are successfully employing a better approach to science. They simply follow the evidence wherever it leads, even if the conclusions make them uncomfortable.”

### **Whatever begins to exist needs a cause**

That sounded reasonable to me, but the battle was just beginning. “Okay, fair enough. Let’s look at the evidence.”

Frank dove right in. “Okay, let’s examine the first principle I mentioned, that whatever begins to exist needs a cause. This universe began to exist, therefore this universe needs a cause.”

“Wait just a second. If *everything* needs a cause, then God needs a cause. If God doesn’t need a cause, then the universe doesn’t need a cause either.” I felt good and smug putting one over on the county judge.

“Don’t be smug too fast,” Frank seemed to read my thoughts. “I said that ‘whatever *begins* to exist’ needs a cause. God never *began* to exist, therefore He is outside the rules for causality.”

“How do you know that? And if God never began to exist, then why can’t the universe also be eternal and beginning-less?”

“Several scientific reasons give us cause to believe that this world had a beginning. One is the second law of thermodynamics stating that the usable amount of energy is being used up. Our universe is slowly winding down and will eventually die a ‘heat death.’ It follows that if the universe is winding down, then it must have been wound up at some time. Also, there is good evidence that the universe is expanding, so the further back you go in time, the more compressed the universe is. The universe can’t go back infinitely in time, so it had to have a beginning.”

“It sounds like you’re describing the Big Bang, which isn’t anything new for me. But most people think the Big Bang disproves God.”

“In reality, there were many scientists who rejected the Big Bang hypothesis because it sounded too much like Genesis chapter one. What most people don’t realize is the Big Bang theory only proves that the

universe had a beginning and therefore needs a cause. Now if that cause is also contingent – or dependent on anything – then that cause needs a cause. Eventually, we need to come back to an Uncaused First Cause, because an infinite series of causes is impossible. The real question is whether or not that cause is personal or impersonal; to answer that question we will have to look elsewhere.”

“Can you slow down? You’re tying my brain in knots.”

“We’re even then. You said I kissed my brains goodbye,” Frank grinned. “Anyway, back to my point – ”

“Just a minute. I don’t understand why an infinite series of causes is impossible.”

Frank explained, “The problem with the infinite series of causes hypothesis, is that when you keep tracing it back, eventually you have a first cause that comes from nothing and nothing can come from nothing.”

“But weren’t you arguing earlier that God came from nothing?”

“No. I *am* saying that God always existed.”

“Isn’t that just as irrational as saying something can come from nothing?”

“Arguing that a God has always existed doesn’t break any rules of logic, but saying something can come from nothing does.”

“What about in quantum physics where they have examples of something coming from nothing?” I objected.

“Even there all physicists know is that something *appears* to be coming from nothing. They don’t know what’s causing it, but something is. People used to think that maggots came from nothing until they discovered that they started out as tiny eggs. Perhaps there’s an invisible, immaterial cause in quantum physics. But you can’t prove that something comes from nothing.”

“But wait, isn’t that what you Christian’s believe - that God created this world out of nothing? Isn’t that admitting that something can come from nothing?”

“No, while we do believe that God created the world out of nothing, we are not claiming that the world arose from nothing. The world came from God; He is that necessary source. Skip, nothing is what rocks think about. Nothing can cause nothing!”

### **Darwin put God out of a job**

It looked as if the avalanche I’d feared was crashing down on me.

“Okay,” I conceded, “so there was most likely an uncaused first cause. But that is a far cry from proving the God of the Bible. Science has pretty much put God out of a job. Darwin made it possible for an atheist to be intellectually fulfilled.”

“Not exactly. Science is starting to devour the theories of Darwinian evolution. The survival of the fittest ideas are leading to the extinction of naturalistic evolution. The fossils of evolutionary theory along with the flat



earth theory will lie obsolete among the layers of discarded ‘facts.’”

I laughed, “That’s pretty strong and poetic language to describe established scientific facts, Frank. We see evolution happening all around us every day.”

“Actually, we see *microevolution*, such as dog breeds and Darwin’s famous finches – which are merely cyclical variations within an already existing species. But what we don’t see, and have never seen is *macroevolution*. We have variation within a species, but never one species mutating into another species. You see, natural selection causes the creatures with the beneficial variations to survive, but the creatures with variations unsuited to the environment die out. And natural selection only works with the genetic information that’s already present. Bear with another example here: It is analogous to a bucket filled with random marbles. If the environment put ‘holes’ half an inch in diameter in the bucket, all the marbles smaller than a half inch will fall out, leaving only the large marbles. Natural selection only weeds out the variations that can’t survive, but it can never create a new species.”

“I don’t know about that, Frank. The difference between a Chihuahua and a Great Dane is almost a whole new species and that change has occurred in just the last few thousand years. Don’t you think that if you gave it more time natural selection would change species?”

“Dog breeds are not results of ‘natural selection.’ The variation in breeds is actually intelligent design at work – humans making ‘unnatural selection.’ Nevertheless, we can still easily classify all the dogs in the canine family. But there is another reason natural selection can’t account for the major changes.”

“Yeah?” Man, I thought, this guy just didn’t let up!

“Natural selection only favors mutations that are beneficial. If a mutation is cumbersome, the animal bearing that mutation would be weeded out by natural selection. So natural selection can’t account for flight.”

“Better explain that assertion,” I said skeptically.

“Flight requires several components that all have to be in place before flight is possible: lighter legs, extremely strong chest muscles, and aerodynamic feathers, among others. Flight animals make for very poor land animals. Here’s a picture of what I mean: Imagine a family of lizards. Little Larry, the youngest, is the family’s ‘ugly duckling.’ Random mutations have placed stumps on his shoulders that will eventually evolve into wings. He is more hairy as feathers start to evolve, his legs are starting to become lighter as muscles atrophy, and his chest muscles are developing. This is Larry the predecessor of modern flight birds. Larry is constantly ridiculed for his ugly appearance, but evolutionists know that eventually Larry’s decedents will rule the skies. Then something terrible happens.”

I bit my nails in mock distress. “Oh dear!”

Frank rolled his eyes. “The lizard family is attacked by a group of dinosaurs. The lizards scurry away, but unfortunately, Larry, whose weaker leg muscles and awkward stumps make him the slowest member of the family, is eaten alive. Natural selection has just eliminated all future birds of flight.”

“Very funny,” I said. But I felt the blow of a strong argument.

“Skip, my point is that any transitional mutation on a land animal will get weeded out by natural selection. Flight is too great a leap to happen by successive changes.”

“But flight *has* evolved, and there *are* flightless birds.”

“Yes, but there is a reason they are flightless. These birds are not built for flight, and the moment they mutate toward a flight animal natural selection will weed them. Only beneficial changes are kept. Anyway, it’s a waste of time to nitpick over some of the details of evolution, because the naturalistic theory has fatal flaws. Two especially devastating flaws are sounding the death knell of Darwinian evolution: irreducible complexity and biological information.”

### **Darwinian evolution’s biggest hurdles**

“Never heard of these,” I said.

“Darwin said, ‘If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.’”

“He said that?” It was news to me. “So you think what he’s predicted has happened?”

“Yes. A biochemist by the name of Michael Behe shocked the scientific community with a book entitled *Darwin’s Black Box*. In it he showed how microbiology has given us several examples of what he calls ‘irreducible complexity,’ as demonstrated by a mechanism that will not work unless it has all of its components in working order. The bird flight I was talking about is an example of irreducible complexity. Behe used the example of a mousetrap to explain the concept. A mousetrap has six basic components: the wood base, the spring, the latch, etc. Now if you take away one of those components, the trap ceases to function. It can’t be built up naturally piece by piece because it will not function till it has all the pieces in place.”

“I’m with you so far.” I said warily.

“Behe gave several examples of this at the cellular level. In Darwin’s day people thought that the cell was a simple, microscopic blob of jelly. It was easy to imagine a warm pre-biotic soup that was struck by a bolt of lightning, causing the first simple cell to form. But now we know that even the simplest cells are extremely complex, with libraries of information, blueprints, machines to read the information, and machines to carry the information to the assembly machines.

“The cell has simply too many components that need to be in

place before it can reproduce itself through natural means. This is very strong proof for an intelligent designer.”

The weight of Frank’s evidence was squashing out some of my atheism. I sat slumped in my chair, not at all liking where this was going. I wasn’t going to give up easily though. Frank pressed on relentlessly.

“This brings us to the problem of biological information. In order for the cell to assemble and reproduce, the proteins – which are the basic building block of life – need information in order to assemble their complex formation.”

“Wait a minute. What do you mean by *information*?”

“I mean, an idea or a plan that is symbolically represented by letters or other symbols. Information requires a transmitter and a receiver. It can be transmitted and received by matter and energy but information isn’t matter or energy. What would be a good example of this?” Thinking hard, Frank stared away at the backyard aspens for a minute. “Ummm. Okay – a blank CD and a CD loaded with encyclopedic volumes and pictures have the exact same amount of mass and matter but one has far more information. Information is represented by symbols that contain an idea or message transcending the actual symbols. Twenty Scrabble pieces can be thrown randomly and will contain no information, but if a mind assembles the letters to form the phrase ‘THE SKY WAS ORANGE TODAY,’ the Scrabble pieces now contain information that transcends the wood and ink. Now there isn’t anything in naturalism that can account for information. Information can only come from a mind. Nature can’t produce information. When archeologists discovered the Rosetta stone, they knew immediately that it was created by a mind; no one dismissed it as a product of natural forces. Scientists are scratching their heads trying to figure out how information got into that first cell.”

“Why not random chance? There are billions of galaxies, and millions of years to work with, so maybe we are just the lucky ones.”

“No, that wouldn’t work. Randomness can’t produce information. Information is too complex and too ordered to happen by chance. Again, if you throw Scrabble pieces on the floor, you may get random words, but you would never get information.”

“Then maybe there is a chemical attraction in matter that made life possible?”

“That theory has been thoroughly dismissed. In fact, Dean Kenyon, the man who first proposed that idea, has since refuted it. If there were such an attraction it could only produce a few sequences of letters. DNA is made up of four base ‘letters’ or compounds that are formed to produce massive amounts of information – all the information necessary for the correct assembly of the entire human body. This language in the cell is far more complex than some random sequences. Each cell contains the same amount of information as a dozen encyclopedias. Chemical attraction would only produce simple, repetitive words such as *the the*

*the the*. But there is no information in that. Information can only come from intelligence. DNA is the language of God.”

That last statement struck me forcibly, but Frank didn’t let up. “Skip, are you aware of the Cambrian explosion?” I nodded.

“Thousands of new species suddenly appeared in the fossil record. No transitional fossils, just thousands of fully developed new creatures. This is a massive amount of new information added to the gene pool and simply can’t be explained by evolution. The amount of information that brings order to this complex planet should cause the materialist to shudder. Information can’t come from an explosion.”

I really didn’t like the feeling of having the cold wall of reason against my back. It was time to regain some ground, so I said, “I’m not sure you really understand the concept of evolution, Frank. You keep making it sound like these changes would have to happen suddenly and that this world came from an explosion. But in reality, the explosion just set the stars in motion. After one of the rocks from the explosion cooled, a warm, nutrient rich pool formed on it, and very simple bacteria gradually began to grow. The first cell was not as complex as the modern cell. The simple bacteria very gradually, over millions of years, evolved into the more complex, information-laden organisms we see today.”

“You make it sound like millions of years are a good thing for your theory. Consider this, though: Our sun is shrinking and slowly running out of heat. Millions of years ago, the sun would have been so hot and close to earth that it would have evaporated all the water on our planet, and life would have been impossible. Now, you mentioned the simple cell concept. Science has shown that it’s extremely improbable for amino acids to form by chance into even one protein. Before the concept of evolving complexity can even work, you have to start with a cell that can reproduce. But that is where the impossibility comes in: the cell that can reproduce already contains a high level of complexity and information unexplainable by natural means. But even if I grant you that somehow the cell came together and started to reproduce, entropy would ensure that the cell would gradually become simpler, not more complex.”

“I disagree. Entropy only says that in a closed system, things move from order to disorder. But the earth isn’t a closed system.”

“True, and I believe there is a Creator, an intelligent mind behind all this. That is what I’m trying to prove.”

“I wasn’t referring to a creator, but to the energy that comes from our solar system.”

“Our solar system can keep giving our earth energy, but not more information,” Frank pointed out. “Natural forces and entropy are the enemies of information. Take archeology, for example: The older an artifact, the more it has decayed. Information and its complexity are gradually lost over time. Let’s look at Mount Rushmore... There is a

high level of complexity and order to those faces – proof that Rushmore is the product of intelligence. Now, if those faces were left by themselves with no intelligent intervention, would those faces become more like the presidents they represent or less?”

“Less, of course. But that is an unfair analogy. Mount Rushmore is *lifeless*. All dead things decay. But things that have life can grow and increase in complexity.”

“That’s exactly my point. Life is a miracle that can only be explained by intelligence. Dead matter can’t arrange itself with the high level of information-rich complexity needed to produce life. Skip, the more I think about this, the more absurd it seems to believe that there is no God. Think about what you have to believe if you reject the existence of God: that life came from non-life with no guiding hand, and that complexity, information, and delicate fine tuning of this world came from random chaos. Doesn’t this strike you as absurd?”

**Doesn’t the Designer need a designer?**

“Well, kind of, but if this world’s complexity requires a designer, then *that* designer must be even more complex. If that designer is more complex, he must need an even greater designer. Postulating a designer just creates an even more absurd impossibility.”

“Skip, look. If something exists, then something always existed, right? Because if there was a time when there was nothing, I mean nothing material or spiritual, then this something that now exists came from nothing, and nothing can come from nothing.”

I twirled my finger by my head. “You’re knot-tying again.”

“We have to ask: Is this *something* that always existed just blind, brute matter or is it an infinite, personal, intelligent being? We need to look at the world and reason from effect back to cause to determine just what this ever-existent first Cause is.”

Frank leaned back in his chair. “Skip, if you aren’t convinced already that this first cause is more than blind matter, here is one thing that absolutely convinced me – consciousness.”

“Huh?”

“Good to know *you’re* still conscious.” Frank grinned. “It is mind boggling to think about consciousness, to realize that we can reflect and ponder the world around us. I find it impossible to see how blind, dead, brute matter could produce consciousness by blind undirected processes. Consciousness could only have come from another conscious being. Look at the evidence, Skip! I have shown that this universe needs a cause. That natural selection can’t account for such things as flight animals. That there are several examples of irreducible complexity that will not function unless they are fully formed, meaning they had to be created fully intact – no missing parts that were added later. That there is too much information in a basic reproducing cell for life to have come about by random chance or chemical attraction. That entropy would

have killed the whole evolutionary process if there weren't intelligence behind the scenes. And that there is nothing in blind, dead, brute matter that could have of itself produced consciousness. When you assess the evidence, it is far more reasonable to surmise that we are the product of a conscious, intelligent being than that we are the result of a random explosion followed by blind chance. Because of these evidences, I no longer have enough faith to be an atheist."

His words hung in the evening air. By now it was dark. The crickets were competing with street traffic for a corner on the noise market. The skies were clear and I could see the stars even with the blinding streetlights. Frank stood up and stretched and looked into the sky.

"Skip, I tried to give you evidence for God from the evidence of design. But whenever I try to put the evidence into an argument, the proof is never as strong as when I just look around and ponder this amazing world. When I think about our brains, I'm amazed that they are far more complex than any computer man has ever assembled. When I think about the intricacies of our blood clotting system, it's incredible to me that the blood only solidifies around the cut instead of throughout the body. When I think about the DNA in each of our cells and how each one contains the entire library of information for the way our body should be built. When I think about romantic love and the transcendent awe I felt after the birth of our daughter, I simply stand amazed. There is no way such incredible beauty and complexity could have come from nothing through blind random processes. To a mind that is willing to face the facts, I think the evidence for God is incontrovertible."

He turned to face me, "Think about the world and the wonder of it for the next few days. Think about what I said and see if it isn't reasonable to believe in God."

I promised I would. That night I thought about the overwhelming evidence. I don't know how I could have missed it all. What Frank shared seemed pretty hard to miss. But when I turned on the news, what I saw made me mad and I forgot all about the strength of Frank's arguments. Some evil dictator had murdered millions of his own people and was starving thousands more. Then the station featured a story about an adorable ten-year-old girl who was battling cancer. It broke my heart to see her struggle to remain positive in face of such a cruel disease. Something in me smoldered against the idea of God, and before long, I'd come up with a challenge that I was sure even Frank couldn't answer. I couldn't wait for our next conversation.

## Chapter 3

The following afternoon I offered to take Frank to a ball game. He hadn't been to a Blue Jays game for several years, so he jumped at the chance.

Toronto is about two hours from our hamlet of Ignoropolis. So this gave me the perfect opportunity to throw my new objections at Frank. I picked him up around 4:30 and headed for the Rogers Center. I jumped into my tirade as soon as we hit the four-lane out of Ignoropolis.

### **All the evil in the world is proof there is no God**

“Frank, I thought a lot about what we talked about yesterday. You told me to look at this world with an open mind, and I have. But all I see is evil, pain, and suffering. Cruel dictators murder and starve their citizens. Babies die of starvation. Little girls are brutally raped and molested – and if they miraculously escape that, they die of cancer. Tsunamis and earthquakes claim thousands of lives every year. When I look at all the disease, wars, famine, and cruelty in the world, I simply can't reconcile all the evil I see with the existence of a God. If there is a designer, He did a crappy job to design a body that ends in death and decay. If there is a God, there is no way He would allow such suffering. A good God would want to wipe out evil and an all-powerful God would be able to wipe out evil. So – if there were such a God, there wouldn't be evil. But I see evil everywhere I look. I don't see how any reasonable human can look at this world and conclude that there is a God.”

Frank was quiet for a while after I'd spit out all my heated words. Then he said, “Skip, every time this subject comes up, I struggle to find the words to deal with it. Pain and suffering are so linked to our emotions that there are no easy intellectual answers. However, in this discussion, we need to make a distinction. Are you bringing up the subject of evil as proof that God doesn't exist? Or do you want to know what God's purposes are in evil? These are two different questions entirely. I can try and show you how evil does not disprove that there is a God, but if you want to know what God's purposes are in allowing evil, God is going to have to answer that one Himself.”

His quietness calmed me some. “I guess right now I am still struggling with His existence. I see evil as proof that there is no God, at least not a good God.”

“I used to think that same way. But now that I'm a Christian, I've examined the issue even closer. I now see the existence of evil, not only as very strong proof that God exists, but also that God is good.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa. That's harsh. I want to hear you defend that statement.”

“First let me ask you a question. Does evil exist?”

“Of course it does! This world is an evil place.”

“Well, how do you know this world is evil?”

“Are you kidding? Look around you, Frank! You as a judge should know better than anyone all the evil that happens in this world. On top of what I mentioned a few minutes ago, women are raped, children are abused, and corrupt leaders lie and steal.”

“But, Skip, how do you know those things are evil?”

Did I have to spell it out for him? “I’ll put it in kid terms, if you like: Because they are bad things that shouldn’t happen – they are simply wrong!”

“Who says they are wrong? Who says these things shouldn’t happen?”

“What do you mean?”

“I want to know if you simply mean you don’t like things like rape and torture, or if you think these are really wrong.”

“I think these things are really wrong!”

“Again, who says?”

“I say they are wrong.”

“Well what if you say rape is wrong but another man thinks rape is good?”

“I am still right: rape is wrong.”

“Why? If that guy is bigger than you, you can’t stop him from raping others.”

“Rape is wrong not just because I say it is wrong but because society says so.”

“So you are saying society is the measure of what is right and wrong?”

“Well, uh, yeah. That sounds right.” Was he trying to catch me in some kind of trap?

“What if one society says it is right to eliminate all Jews and black people, and another society says all people are valuable and have equal worth. Who is right?”

“The society that says all people have equal worth.”

“Why is that?”

“Because the majority of societies believe this.”

“It hasn’t always been that way; most societies throughout history have been racist. Let me ask you a question. If Hitler had won World War II, and succeeded in spreading his propaganda, would that have made him right in exterminating ten million Jews and Poles?”

“No, of course not!”

“Again, why? So far you have said that majority rule is the standard of morality, but if Hitler had won, his view would have been the majority view. So on what basis do you call him wrong?”

I stared at the crowded lanes of traffic while I pondered Frank’s question. I had never thought about it that way. “I guess I don’t really



know. Are you saying that there ultimately is no right and wrong?"

"No. I am only saying that if God doesn't exist, neither does evil."

"Why does there have to be God if there is evil?"

"Have you ever *seen* evil, Skip? Can you weigh evil on a scale or measure its dimensions?"

I gave up. Where was this guy going, anyway? "I don't know, you tell me," I said.

"When you were describing things that were evil, you said they were evil because they 'shouldn't be that way.' So then evil assumes that there is a standard of good, or that there is a way things *should* be. Without a standard of good or how things ought to be, there can be no evil, because evil is only a deprivation of good, a departure from the way things should be. But if there is no God, where does this standard come from?"

"Humanity. Why can't humans be the judge of what is right and wrong?"

"Because that only leaves us with majority rule, but there is something within us that still says some things are wrong even if the majority don't think so. I am assuming you would still think it is wrong for one human to eat another even if you were greatly outnumbered, and especially if you have been captured by a cannibalistic African tribe, the majority of whom thought it was fine to eat a human – in fact, they're ready to dig in! Now if humanity is the standard of goodness, then it is fine for the cannibals to eat you: The majority makes it right. So if humans aren't the standard, what is?"

"Morality is relative, so the standard will change. Some cultures think homosexuality is immoral, some think it is fine. I don't think this standard that you want to find exists."

"So what you are saying is that the Holocaust was not evil?"

"I said no such thing!"

"You said the standard will change. So, for instance, we Canadians thought it was wrong to kill the Jews and discriminate based on race, and the Germans thought it was fine. By the Germans' standard, we Canadians were the evils ones for going over there and killing innocent Germans and imposing our morality on them! Boy, Skip, I wouldn't voice your views too loudly, you won't be very popular!"

I glared at the truck ahead of me. "That *isn't* what I meant. You're twisting my words."

"I'm merely following the logical progression of your words. You said the standard will change. So by the Germans' standard, we were the evil ones."

"All I meant is the some things are right for me but not for others. I think it is fine to eat pork, but I have a Jewish buddy who says it is wrong. Who am I to say he is wrong?"

“Exactly. Who *are* you to say he is wrong? Who are we to say that the Germans were wrong?”

“Frank, you and I are nothing, but society can say who is right and wrong.”

“We’re starting to go in circles. Society can’t be the standard of right and wrong because when one society wants to inflict their morality on another, there is no higher standard of right and wrong beyond both societies that can judge which morality is right! Here is another problem with society being the standard of good and evil: If you disagree with the way things are in your society, you are the evil one, regardless of what your stance is. It doesn’t matter what you think is good or bad. As long as you are in the minority, you are evil. But here is the problem: our heroes are the ones who have stood up to immoral societies and made them change. By your definition, Martin Luther King, Jr., was an evil man because he went against the standard of his society. Do you feel comfortable calling him evil? Again, if you do, you might want to keep your views to yourself!”

“That’s ridiculous.”

“Then I must ask again, how do you determine what is good and evil? If we are the product of a blind accident, there can be no right or wrong. Like Dostoyevsky said, ‘If there is no God, all things are permissible.’ If you roll a handful of dice, you can’t judge them for the results; the forces of nature are blindly leading the dice. No moral obligation can arise from chance. If you threw Scrabble pieces on the floor, and a phrase randomly formed, ‘EAT DOGS,’ would you feel any obligation to go devour your neighbor’s dachshund? No. Moral obligation can only come from a mind. If we are the result of a lucky accident, there is no ultimate person over us to whom we owe moral obligation. If there is no God, the Nazis were not wrong in murdering millions of Jews. They were simply following the forces of nature.”

I ignored the heavy feeling I was getting in the pit of my stomach to protest, “Once again, Frank, I have to disagree! There can still be morality even if there is no God. Our sense of right and wrong is the result of an evolutionary process.”

“That doesn’t change what I have been saying. Look at it this way. If there is a sense of moral obligation in this world – in other words, a sense that there are some things we should and shouldn’t do – then this sense could only come from one of four options. One, from ‘beneath’ us – such as, an evolutionary instinct for survival. Two, from within us, wherein morality is decided on an individual basis. Three, from society, in which case morality is decided by majority vote or peer pressure. The last option is that it comes from an ultimate person that is above society. Let’s look at these options and see which ones give us any real moral obligation.”

“All righty.”

“If morality is from beneath – just an evolved instinct – is that binding on us? No. If the wind is blowing on us, can’t we choose to walk into it? We have ‘evolved’ the ability to grow long hair. Is it immoral to go against evolution and cut it? Of course not, so if morality is merely the result of evolutionary process, that might explain why we feel a moral sense, but it doesn’t explain why we should have to obey it!”

I saw his point. Frank continued, “What if this moral sense only comes from within? Is that something we should feel obligated to follow? I mean, if we choose one thing, can’t we change our mind and do something else? In fact, sometimes morality dictates that we don’t follow what our instincts are telling us, such as when we are hungry and tempted to steal food.”

Frank waited while I passed a Semi, then jumped back in, “What about society? Isn’t society just a collection of equals? Why should we be obligated to obey our equals? As we have seen, society can’t be the standard of right and wrong because that only leaves us with a might-makes-right ethic, which you and I both know is wrong.” Frank’s questions had me nodding and shaking my head almost simultaneously. I was getting kind of dizzy.

“You see,” he went on, “only if the fourth option is correct, is there any real obligation in this world. *Only* if there is a God can we say that things should be a certain way. God is the only person who transcends society and has written the moral law on our hearts through our consciences. He is the one who makes morality binding. We can choose against our instincts, and against what society tells us, and get away with it. But if morality is from God, every person will face God – death is unavoidable – and no one will get away with wrongdoing.

*“Skip, if the atheist is right, morality is simply an illusion – a necessary invention to help human survival. But the atheist can’t say why morality is binding or why we should have to obey it. If there is no God, morality is simply a description of the way things are rather than a prescription for the way things should be. Remember: laws can’t come from impersonal, natural forces, they can only come from a person.”*

“But the laws of gravity and physics are impersonal. They could have come from an impersonal source.”

“That is exactly my point: the laws of gravity and physics are impersonal. They can’t give us shoulds and shouldn’ts. Were the Wright brothers immoral when they invented a way to disobey gravity and fly? It is *moral* laws that are binding and these can only come from a person and God is the only person bigger than any society – like I was saying earlier.”

“So if there is no God, we should not obey the governments? Are you saying there’s no value in being good?”

“No, I am saying that without God, words like *good* and *evil* have no objective meaning, and therefore are only illusions.”

## **Is morality simply an illusion?**

I changed lanes while I pondered this barrage of information. Finally I spoke up. “Well, how do you know that this isn’t the case? Maybe morality is simply an illusion.”

“Then there is no evil in the world, and that was your whole case against the existence of God.”

“Okay, so there is no God and there is no evil.”

“But Skip, the moral law is undeniable.”

“How?”

“Well, if I tell you to believe that there is a moral law or I will shoot you, what are you going to do? If you get upset and say I can’t do that, then you acknowledge that there is moral obligation in the world. Everywhere you look, humanity assumes there’s a way things should be. Even people who deny it in theory acknowledge it with their reactions when evil is done to them. I read a story about a student who wrote a paper on the idea that all morality is relative. According to him, it was up to the individual to decide what is right and wrong. His paper was neatly printed out at the right word length and filed in a blue binder. When the prof graded the paper, he gave it an F. He said he didn’t like blue binders. The student was outraged. He said, ‘That isn’t right! I deserved an A.’ ‘But,’ said the prof, ‘I liked your paper so much that I realized I could follow my own morality when it came to grading, so I decided to give you an F.’ The student realized right then that his view was unlivable.

“I find it ironic when atheists get mad at Christians who are ‘forcing their morality’ on others, when by their very protests, the atheists themselves are trying to force their own standard of morality on Christians and shut them up. Certain atheists say it is wrong to outlaw abortion and gay marriage, but they offer no ground for why these things, or anything for that matter, are wrong. I could go on and on. The only way an atheist can be consistent with his godless view of morality is to shut up and not try to influence anyone, because without a God there is no person who supersedes society, no transcendent Moral Law Giver. Without a Moral Law Giver, there is no moral law, without a moral law, there is no right and wrong. It is all up to the individual, and if it is all up to the individual, then no one can complain about the way things are – no one can say that Mother Teresa was better than Hitler, because without God there is no standard for the way things should be – just a dismal description of the way things are.” Frank drew a deep breath. “In summary, Skip, if there is no God, the Holocaust was simply a matter of opinion, like different ice cream flavors. But if there is just one thing in this world that we recognize is truly wrong, and not just a matter of taste, then there has to be a God.”

The traffic was slowing to a crawl as we approached Toronto, but my mind was going 80 miles an hour. I still felt moral outrage for all the horrible things I saw in the world, but it seemed I couldn’t even

call what I saw wrong in any meaningful sense unless I acknowledged a moral law that was even above society. I had to try another approach.

**If there is evil, then God isn't good**

“Frank, I understand your point, but I still don't see how you can get around my objections that if God was good, He wouldn't allow evil, and if He was all-powerful, He would be able to prevent all evil. But there *is* evil in the world, so I don't see how there could be a God.” Stick *that* in your pipe and smoke it, I thought.

“Your question assumes that you know what God's purposes are. You said that if He was good, He wouldn't allow evil. But what if God has a good purpose for allowing evil?”

“How could you even begin to say that?! Then He isn't all good – He's a pervert.” “Let me ask you, by what standard do you say that God isn't good?”

“By our human standard.”

“We've already discussed that our standard is worthless. God is the creator. He is our standard of right and wrong. It is foolish to judge God by our standard. If an ant colony moved into your kitchen and you started exterminating them, would you feel guilty in the least if they declared you evil by their standard?”

“No. Are you saying that God is good but not by our standards?”

“Of course it isn't by our standards. God is absolutely good. He is the standard of goodness. He is also all-knowing. We only grasp half of one percent of knowledge, remember? If your toddler is begging to devour a carton of ice cream, you in your superior knowledge know that he'll get sick, so you say no. But from the little guy's perspective, your actions look wrong. You appear mean. In the same way with God, from our limited knowledge of His purposes and what we really need as humans, sometimes it will look like He is mean or even evil.”

“But why did God allow evil?”

“Now you are asking another question. That is a question only God can answer. I was only trying to show that evil does not prove there is no God. And the fact that we call things evil is proof that there is a moral law – a standard of the way things should be. This standard only exists if God does. So based on what we looked at yesterday, there is tremendous scientific proof that God exists, and philosophical proof that not only does He exist, but He is also good.”

“I still don't see how you can call God good when He created evil and forced it on to innocent human beings.”

“Whoa, I never said that. God didn't create evil.”

“Wait. Aren't you contradicting yourself? First you say that God created everything, then you prove to me that evil exists, and now you say that God didn't create evil?”

“Evil exists, but not as a material thing. You can't weigh it remember? Evil is only a deviation from the standard of good. Now

God created everything good. But He also created another good thing called choice. We humans abused this gift of choice by making wrong choices.”

Frank held up his hand. “This hand is good. It can provide strong protection and also give affection. But with a wrong choice, this good hand could kill someone, thus making it an evil hand. But the hand in and of itself is good. Our wrong choices brought evil into the world and continue to make this world an evil place.”

“Then why did God give us choice if He knew all the suffering it would bring? The way I see it, God allowed the possibility of evil, so that doesn’t take Him off the hook.”

“No, it doesn’t, I know. God is sovereign even over evil. I honestly don’t know why He allowed it, though. One possibility is that God created us with choice so that love would be possible. Without choice, love is either forced – which is not true love – or it’s comparable to a puppet being pulled by strings.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you know those dolls where you pull a string and they say every time, ‘I love you.’ Does that mean anything to you? Of course not. The doll has no choice. But when your wife says ‘I love you,’ it means something, because your wife has the free choice not to love you. Without free choice, love would be impossible. I also think that apart from choice, even the enjoyment of life would be impossible. But remember that with the ability to choose love comes the ability to choose to hate and hurt others. Look how much of the pain in this world is related to wrong choices.”

“A lot of it,” I said thoughtfully. “But not all of it. What about tsunamis, and earthquakes, and famines? Those aren’t our fault!”

“Again, I don’t know God’s reasons for such things. But I know that when humanity chose to reject God, we brought death and suffering into the world. When you reject the source of all life and goodness, death and pain is inevitable. Now I believe God uses such disasters to call us back to Him, because if we stay separated, we will die anyway.”

“Why doesn’t God explain why He allows evil?”

“I think there are two reasons. For one, we wouldn’t comprehend His reason even if He did explain. Kind of like when you have to pull quills from a dog. From the dog’s perspective, it is in pain, and now its owner, who is supposed to be good, is inflicting even more pain. But you keep putting the dog through pain, even though you can’t explain *why* to the dog, because you know it is for its good. The second reason is that God knows that when we are in the midst of pain, what we need is comfort, not an explanation. God doesn’t tell us why we suffer evil, but He does give us His comfort, which is far more satisfying.”

By this time it was 6:30 and I had just pulled into a parking space a few blocks from the Rogers Center. I was pretty overwhelmed by

the whole mentally challenging discussion. Frank had made some points that I couldn't refute. But I still had many questions about what this *being* would be like. "Frank, you've given me a lot to think about. I see that the evidence that there is a God is far more compelling than I thought it would be. I will have more questions later, but right now I just want to shut my brain off and watch our Jays crush the Yankees."

"Sounds good, Skip."

## Chapter 4

The Jays did crush the Yankees 15-0, but I wasn't able to shut my brain off. I couldn't figure out the nagging uneasiness that wouldn't let me leave this subject alone.

Three years ago, Paul put a rock in my shoe, a burr in my armpit, whatever you want to call it. I used to be able to ignore this whole Christianity thing. Christians repulsed me, which made it easy for me to hide behind my atheistic view of life. As long as I thought that there was no God out there to worry about, I was fine. But lately, I have had this growing dread that perhaps there is a God out there.

Then I find out that Frank Shaw, one of the most logical men I know, has become a Christian. This bothers me to no end. For years I have believed that we atheists had all the logic and evidence on our side, and that belief in God was purely a matter of blind faith. But Frank's arguments almost have me convinced that maybe there is *something* out there that put this world into existence. Even my argument about evil turned out to be proof for some sort of God.

A God is a scary thought. A cosmic ghost who watches your every move, a giant being who has laid down a moral law, a specter so powerful He can create the world out of nothing – these are not ideas I want to accept. My once safe haven of agnosticism was being dismantled by facts I couldn't ignore. I guess you could say it was my fear that drove me to protest, but probably more than anything it was my stubborn refusal to accept the idea that I was accountable to Someone.

I didn't want anyone running my life. My desperate search for a loophole that would free me from this noose of Christianity, and its rigid morality, continued. On the way home, I tried to assemble another agnostic defense I could hide behind.

### **Maybe there is a God, but if there is, He is unknowable**

"Frank," I said, picking peanut bits from between my teeth, "I am just about ready to accept that there is some sort of God out there who started this whole world, but I don't think we can really know anything about Him. I mean, if you polled a thousand different people, you'd get a thousand different answers about who God is. It seems like it would be extremely arrogant and narrow-minded to think that we can know God as He really is. I respect you, Frank, but who do you think you are to believe that you have the corner on truth – that your view of God is the correct one?"

"Skip, do you believe that the world is round?"

"I don't think I need to even answer that."

"Well, then, don't you think that you are being arrogant to claim to know that the world is round when thousands of people have thought



that it was flat?”

“That is an unfair analogy. You can *prove* that the world is round. It’s not arrogant to believe a proven fact. What *is* arrogant is to continue to disbelieve something to be true, even when all the evidence points that way. I’ve got a friend who thinks that the world is flat, and that we have never sent anyone to the moon.”

“I agree – with you, I mean, not with your friend. It is very arrogant to refuse to believe when all the evidence points a certain way. I used to think that anyone who thought they were the only ones who knew what God was like were close-minded bigots.”

I cut in, “Yeah, it’s like that story of the blind men and the elephant. They each grab a different part of the elephant and come to different conclusions based on what they’re feeling. One grabs the tail and thinks he’s got hold of a rope, one touches the belly and thinks it is wall, one touches the tusks and thinks it is a spear. I think it’s that way with God: each of the religions has a different part of God. The blind men would be foolish to insist that they alone know what they are holding. In the same way, it is foolish for Christians to think that they are the only ones who know God.”

“If God was silent – if He never communicated his truth to us – I would agree with you. Our lives are too short to come to a full knowledge of truth. If God had been silent, your opinion would be as valid as mine. But if God has revealed himself through language, if God wrote a book, and that book proved to be really the words of God, then the one who accepts this is the humble one and the one who rejects it, insisting that we can’t know what God is like, is the one who is arrogant and bigoted.”

### **Can God confirm His revelation with miracles?**

“But with all the different scriptures in the world, I think it is arrogant to think that the Bible is the only true one. I mean, we have the Koran, the Book of Mormon, the Torah, the Vedas, and the Bible. How in the world are we to know which is true, or if any of them are true?”

“Miracles. God could confirm his truth with a supernatural sign.”

“Oh, come on, Frank. You really *have* let your brains go! No one with a high school diploma believes in miracles anymore. We know that miracles are an impossibility.”

“If there was no God, yes, miracles would be impossible. But if there is a God, then a miracle – or a suspension of a natural law – would be no problem, because the greatest miracle was the creation of the world out of nothing.”

“I think you’re assuming too much here. You have barely proven that there is some cosmic IT that caused this universe, but we don’t know if it is an IT, or a person, or a he or a she or even if there are many gods.”

### **What has God revealed about Himself outside of any holy text?**

“Skip, revelation from God is the only sure way to answer that question, but I think quite a bit can be known about God apart from any holy text.”

“Such as –?”

“From reason and a study of the world around us, we can deduce that God is one, that He is personal, that He is infinite, that He is very powerful, intelligent, wise, and good.”

“Another sweeping assertion! Show me how this can be done, because when I look at the world and use reason, I sure don’t come to that conclusion!”

**God is infinite...**

“First, God is infinite. We know this because all finite beings need a cause. A finite being is dependent on things outside itself for its existence. If there isn’t anything else besides the finite being, that being could not exist. Therefore, a finite being can’t be the first uncaused cause. I conclude then that the first cause must be infinite – outside of the limitations of time and space and matter – dependent on nothing else for its own existence.”

“Why must God be outside time, space, and matter?”

“Because if God was inside time and space, He could not have been the uncaused first cause. But God brought these things into existence. Therefore, He is outside them – unlimited by anything.”

“I think most of that went right over my head, but I’m pretty sure I got your point. Keep going.”

**...One...**

“Well, since the first cause had to be infinite, it also had to be one. Infinite is indivisible, and another being would limit the other, but an infinite being isn’t limited by anything outside itself, so there can only be one infinite, self-existent cause.”

“Okay, so God is one and infinite. You’ve used a lot of high-falutin’ gobbledegook and you haven’t really said much.”

**...Personal...**

Frank laughed. “I’m sorry. You have to remember that I am forced to listen to lawyers for hours on end. I guess they’ve been rubbing off on me. But back on topic, I also think we can know that God is personal.”

My trademark sarcasm took over, “Like a personal pan pizza? Or as in, now I have my very own personal God? How nice.”

Frank laughed again. “You were born to be a shock-jock radio host. No, by personal I mean the ability to choose and make decisions, to have freedom of the will. A human is personal. As opposed to the impersonal, which is bound by natural forces. Wind, electricity, and atoms are examples of impersonal things.”

“New Agers believe in an impersonal God.”

“Yes, I know, sort of a cosmic force like on Star Wars. But there are real philosophical problems with New Age philosophy.”

“Like?”

“An impersonal force can’t make decisions. But science has shown us that there was a time when this universe didn’t exist. That means that God had to exist outside of this universe and had to choose to create this universe. If God didn’t have the power of choice, this world would never have come into existence. But this world did come into existence. Therefore God has the power of choice, which makes God personal.”

“Wait a second. Are you saying that just because God is the cause of this world, He must be personal? Not all causes are personal. A lightning strike can cause a forest fire, but lightning isn’t personal.”

“Of course not. Lightning is an example of an impersonal force. It doesn’t strike where it chooses, but rather where the forces of nature direct it.”

“But if impersonal forces can cause lightning strikes, why can’t God be an impersonal force?”

“These natural forces are really the laws of physics. The question remains, where did the laws of physics come from? See, here is another way to argue that God is personal. I believe that no effect can be greater than its cause.”

“Yeah, the law of diminishing returns proves that.”

“The personal is more complex than the impersonal. In fact, the personal can’t come from the impersonal. Plus, if God did choose to communicate to or us, or even become one of us, that too would prove that God is personal.”

**...Powerful...**

“I am not buying all your ideas just yet. I think the verdict is still out on whether God is personal. But what else do you think you can prove about God?”

“God is extremely powerful. Actually, God must be greater than the sum total of all the power in the universe – that means all the power in every engine, body, lightning strike, etc.”

“Why is that?” Once Frank got past the “gobbledygook,” he was fascinating to listen to.

“Because if the sum total of the power in the world was greater than the power of God, some of that power would have come from nothing, which we already agreed is impossible.”

“Anything else we can know about God?”

**...Intelligent...**

“A couple of things. One, God must be extremely intelligent. The design of our bodies is incredibly complex; and our universe is amazingly fine-tuned. The architect behind all this must have super intelligence.

**...And Good**

“And God is good. Like I said before, He is the source and

standard of all goodness. So I believe from philosophy alone, we can show that there is one, infinite-personal God who is all-powerful, intelligent, and good. Now this God proves most of the different religions false.”

“*Really.*” I peered at the blazing lights of traffic on the busy freeway.

“Hindus, Mormons, Native American, African and other religions teach that there are many gods, or that there is an impersonal force out there, but there is no evidence for such a view of God. Buddhists are basically atheistic, which again goes against the evidence. Only three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a God that is compatible with what logic and science have revealed.”

“That seems harsh to so casually dismiss the faith of millions of people!”

“Don’t you dismiss the faith of those who think the earth is flat and the moon made of cheese?”

“Well, yes, but the earth and the moon are verifiable facts.”

“So are the facts that I have given you for God. But these facts require you to set aside your bias that rules out the supernatural before you look at the evidence. There isn’t a scientific law that says that the supernatural is impossible. Every thinking person must accept the possibility of the supernatural, especially when faced with the fact that every naturalistic theory postulating a God-less beginning for the universe is breaking down.”

### **Which religion is true?**

“Okay, so you feel that you have narrowed it down to three religions, but how are we supposed to know which one is true?”

“A God such as the one we have been discussing would have no problem communicating with His creation, and would be able to use miracles to confirm that such revelation was from Him.”

### **What is a miracle?**

“Then if some crazy, unexplainable thing happens, that is proof that God is speaking to us?”

“No, not at all, but you bring up an important issue. By miracle, I don’t just mean an act of God. If you believe in God, you believe that every creation of new life is a miracle in that sense. But new life simply follows God’s amazing natural design. A miracle would be a supernatural act for the purpose of divine confirmation of a prophet or message. Historically, a king would use his seal to confirm his message. In the same way, God could use a miracle to confirm His message. As we have seen from science and philosophy, God is powerful, purposeful, and good, so a sign from God would bear these fingerprints. A true miracle would be supernatural, in other words, natural forces or means could not explain it. It would have purpose and design. And finally, it would promote morality; it would have a good end.”

“Okay, I am with you so far.”

“Now we can check the historical record and see if God has used miracles to confirm one of these three religions. I now believe, after much research, that God has used the miraculous to confirm that Christianity is true, and more specifically that God became a man and proved this by rising from the dead.”

“You know, I had a conversation with a guy named Paul who was trying to tell me the same thing. He used some very compelling arguments, too. So compelling I’ve been mulling over them for the past three years. He showed how Jesus couldn’t be just a great moral teacher because of His claim to be God. So Jesus was a liar, a lunatic, or God in the flesh. Paul argued that Jesus backed up his claim by fulfilling prophecy, living a sinless life, and rising from the dead. His evidence for the resurrection was also pretty compelling. As you know, my favorite Easter show was shooting the resurrection myth full of holes. But I couldn’t do that with this guy. He proved how ridiculous it was to believe that Jesus merely swooned. He showed convincingly that the tomb *was* empty, and that the Jews and Romans *wouldn’t* have taken the body because they wanted to squash Christianity and the disciples *couldn’t* have taken the body because they went on to suffer and die – something nobody would do to uphold what they knew to be a lie. The appearances can’t be explained by hallucinations. And finally he showed that only a true resurrection can account for the change in Paul, in Jesus’ brother, James, and for the social transformation of the first century.”

“Interesting! This sounds a lot like the Paul I talked to. Wow, and you didn’t believe him even when all his evidence pointed to Jesus’ deity and resurrection? Why did you reject what he said?”

“Ever since that conversation, I have been bothered by what the man said. But I have a couple of reasons for rejecting the evidence even though it seems to make a lot of sense. For starters, I guess the man’s reasons didn’t persuade me because I was convinced that there was no God. Since, in my mind, there was no God, then a man claiming to be God and a true resurrection from the dead were impossibilities. If there is no God, any explanation makes more sense than believing that Jesus was actually God. I ruled out the possibility of these events actually happening. And because I couldn’t argue with the arguments from the text, I decided that the New Testament manuscripts are simply a brilliant forgery. Or at least there was some truth in them but the church has added and embellished over the centuries. I think all of Jesus’ claims to be God were added later.”

“So you basically rejected the arguments because they were impossible if God didn’t exist, and you don’t think the Gospels are reliable history, right?”

“Yeah. Yeah, that’s right.”

“Well, if there is a God, then these things would not only be possible, but likely. It is likely, because a resurrection has all the earmarks

of a miracle – it has the fingerprints of God. It was supernatural, it can't be explained naturally. It has purpose and design. The resurrection wasn't just an unexplained body disappearing, but an event that had been prophesied, and one that Jesus even said would be proof of his divinity. And the resurrection encourages morality. So then, if there is a God, the resurrection is a possibility and the evidence needs to be examined with an open mind. It can't be rejected on blind presuppositions."

"I agree, Frank. But the idea of a resurrection is extraordinary, so it would require extraordinary evidence. It is far more possible to me that the Gospels were forged or tampered with than it is to believe that a man was God and that he rose from the dead."

"But since it is possible that Jesus rose from the dead, we need to look at the evidence and see if the Gospels stand up to scrutiny. I used to think just like you did, but the evidence for the resurrection is indeed extraordinary. The resurrection has more historical confirmation than almost any other ancient event. You have been given the arguments for Jesus' deity and resurrection from the Gospels, but it sounds like now you need to see if the Gospels themselves stand up to scrutiny. Skip, if the New Testament passes inspection and proves reliable, and if the evidence shows that the existence of God is likely, then the resurrection of Jesus is a verified fact of history. If Jesus rose from the dead, then that is God's stamp of approval on Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus would be the clearest, most explicit revelation of what God is like. If God has so clearly revealed what He is like and what His purposes are, the one who believes such revelation isn't arrogant for believing the words of God. However, to reject a clear revelation of God is narrow minded and arrogant."

Frank's conclusion was a heavy one. I was quiet as I signaled left and turned into Frank's driveway. "That's a lot of 'ifs.' You have yet to prove that the biblical Gospels are reliable. Once you do that, I'll have a lot to consider."

After I got home, I stepped out of the car and stared into the starry sky. I felt so alone and profoundly empty in a vast universe. Then, for the first time in years, I felt something stir within me, that maybe, just maybe, there was something out there. But for now, I had more searching to do before I *knew* for sure. I've had it with blind faith.

## Chapter 5

My expertise is making arguments and rebuttals at a popular level. This is what made me the once great radio host. However, I'll admit I've never been one to really dig into a truly scholarly resource. So to research the New Testament documents, I read the *Da Vinci Code* and watched an ABC special on Jesus. After this in-depth study, I felt ready to challenge the honorable Frank Shaw. My opportunity came the following weekend. We both love fishing, so I invited Frank along to a nearby lake – little Lake Ontario. We left early Saturday morning, and by 7:30 we were out in my motorboat with bated lines and ready minds. (Sorry. That last “line” sounded a little “fishy.” Man, I would never “get away” with puns like that on my radio show. I guess such punnery doesn't “hook” people or “lure” them in. But I digress; I will now get back to the issues of “reel” importance.) I didn't tell Frank about the research I did or all the objections I discovered. I decided to let Frank tell me his evidence and I would stump him with my secret ammo at the appropriate times.

### **Are the Gospels reliable histories?**

“So I'm ready for you to dish out your evidence that the Gospels are reliable,” I said. “How do you know that they haven't been hopelessly corrupted in the thousands of times they have been translated – or maybe even embellished by over-zealous scribes?”

Frank cast out his line and rested the pole in the clamp on the edge of the boat. “Well, first off, if we're going to be fair to the texts, we need to subject them to the same tests all historical documents are subjected to. There are three main tests. The first one is: do we have accurate copies of the originals? Second, were the original writers qualified to write on the subject? And finally, can the writers be trusted to be telling the truth? Let's look at the first test: Do we have accurate copies?”

#### **1. Do we have accurate copies?**

“That is a good place to start,” I interrupted. “How in the world can we even hope to know what the original documents said? I mean, they've been translated so many times and copied thousands of times, too. Remember playing the telephone game as a kid? I'd whisper something to the kid beside me, who would do the same to the next kid down the line. After it had gone through twenty or thirty kids, the original message was hopelessly jumbled. How do you know this didn't happen with the Gospels?”

“Historians have methods to test whether this very thing has happened. They look for two factors to determine reliability. One, how many copies do we have? And second, how big is the gap between the earliest copy and the original? The more copies we have and the smaller the gap, the more certain historians are that they can reconstruct the

original. Let me give you an example of how this works. Your great-great-great-grandma wrote a fabulous lemon scone recipe in the 1820s. The recipe has been hand-copied throughout the years and passed on to each generation. At each copying, slight errors have crept in. Words have been misspelled, baking times vary, and amounts have been modified. You decide to get the recipe straight. The stories you heard about all the county fair ribbons your ancient granny won have you curious to know exactly what the original tasted like. You contact as many extended family members as you can. You get forty recipe cards back; the oldest is from, say, 1895. You have ten different copies from the first twenty years of the 1900s. The rest are from the 1940s onward. You figure out that the older copies are probably more accurate. You also notice that on thirty-five cards the recipe calls for salt, while only two call for brown sugar, and one calls for Splenda. You also notice that the card from 1895 and nine of the ten from the early part of the century call for salt and make no mention of brown sugar. The manuscript evidence makes it clear that original recipe had salt but no brown sugar, and because Splenda wasn't in use till around the turn of the millennium, you know that Splenda was not in the original."

Frank reeled in his line and re-cast. "Historians use the same principles used in the recipe hunt. Now before I tell you what kind of manuscript evidence the New Testament has, I want to let you know the kind of manuscript evidence there is for other books from the same time period as the New Testament. Caesar's *Gallic Wars* has nine surviving handwritten copies and the gap between the oldest copy and the original is one thousand years. That's over a millennium of time for corruption to enter unchecked, yet historians consider the nine copies accurate enough to be pretty certain about what the original said. This is reflective of other works from that time. Homer's *Iliad* has the second-best attestation next to the New Testament. We have a stunning six hundred and forty-three copies and the time gap is only five hundred years. That is remarkable verification. With that many copies to compare, historians can be completely certain what the original document was like."

"You're making me curious... what kind of manuscript evidence do we have with the New Testament?"

"This is where it is amazing. We have over five thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and when you count the handwritten copies written in Latin, Coptic, and Egyptian, the total comes to over twenty-four thousand! And the time gap is only forty years."

Time to pull out my first bit of ammo. "But I read that there are over two hundred thousand errors in these manuscripts. With that many errors, how can we be certain about the originals?"

"Skip, that high number of errors is due to the high volume of manuscripts. You have to consider how these errors are counted. If the historian can determine that a word was spelled one way in the original,



then every time that word is misspelled in another manuscript it is counted as an error. So if it is misspelled in two thousand copies, you've got two thousand 'errors.' But they can call it an error because they know for sure what written in the original. Honest textual critics have determined that ninety-nine percent of the New Testament is unquestionably accurate. Less than one percent is in dispute, then, and no major doctrines are in question. It's amazing how God has preserved His word."

## **2. Were the original writers eyewitnesses?**

"Okay, okay. So we can be pretty certain of what was written in the original. But how do we know the original aren't just myths and made-up forgeries commissioned by the Catholic Church when they tried to convince people that Jesus was God?"

"Where have you been getting your history, Skip?" Frank gave me a look.

"Uh, that's irrelevant. Please just answer the question."

"Well, that is the next test a document is subjected to: Was this work written by an eyewitness close to the date of the events it records, or is it a fictionalized forgery from many years later? Let's look at the Gospels. First they claim to be written by eyewitnesses or by people who knew eyewitnesses."

"But I read that these Gospels weren't written till the second or third century and they certainly weren't written by the authors that are named."

"Next time you do your research, look up a credible scholar, not some fictional tabloid. There is unanimous testimony among the church fathers that the Gospels were written by Mark – using Peter as source – and Luke, the friend of Paul, and by disciples Matthew and John. If someone were going to write a forgery, they certainly wouldn't pick a tax collector, or lesser knowns like Mark or Luke. In fact, later on, when people did start writing forgeries, they included well-known people like Mary or Peter. The best evidence shows that these Gospels were written early on. Have you read Acts?"

"No."

"It's a detailed account of what is happening with the early church and Paul. It ends with a cliffhanger: Paul's in jail and about to appear before Nero. If Acts were a forgery, the author would have made the ending neat and tidy. But it has an unresolved ending. The only reason that can account for this is that the book was finished before Paul was killed in A.D. 62."

Frank kept talking as he started to reel in his line, "In Acts, Luke refers to his Gospel as 'the former account I made,' so that means that the Gospel of Luke was written no later than the late fifties. Plus, Luke draws from Mark's writings, which of course had to have been authored earlier in the fifties. That means these two Gospels were written *less than thirty years after the resurrection!* Thirty years isn't enough time for legend to

creep in, because there are too many critics still living who can set the record straight.”

“I’ve never heard this stuff before. If true, it’s pretty amazing. So what about Matthew and John – when were they written?”

“Internal evidence points to some time before A.D. 70. Here is why: The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, yet this isn’t mentioned at all in the Gospels. Actually, the writers refer to the temple as if it is still standing.”

“Pardon my ignorance, but why’s the temple destruction such a big deal?” I started digging through the tackle box for a new lure while Frank launched into another example.

“If you read a history of New York City that made no mention of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, wouldn’t you assume it was written before 2001? This is comparable to Jerusalem and the temple being laid flat, catastrophes Jesus Himself prophesied! If these Gospels were forgeries written after the date, you can bet Matthew and John would have made sure to include the destruction of the temple to verify that Jesus was a real prophet. I believe there is little doubt that the Gospels were written within the lifetime of those who walked with Jesus.”

“Ouch.” A wayward hook caught on my thumb as I picked up my favorite lure. “Got more evidence that the writers were eyewitnesses?” I wagged my thumb. “Any particular tantalizing catch?”

“I never run out of evidence, Skip,” Frank grinned. “Did you know that honest textual historians accept ancient texts as trustworthy until proven unreliable? So unless clear falsehoods or inconsistencies are found in the text, it’s valid. Now with the New Testament, the writers included many details that *could* have been falsified. John records fifty-nine details about Jerusalem and prominent people of his day. In Acts, Luke included over eighty such details. These guys were clearly intimately familiar with the times and places they wrote about. Archaeology and secular historians have verified all of these details. If the New Testament writers have proven trustworthy in every area where they can be tested, shouldn’t we trust them in the areas where we can’t?”

“But the Gospels contain miracles. Don’t the writers disqualify themselves by including supernatural elements?” Right now I wouldn’t mind if that hook in my thumb came out supernaturally without me having to yank it out.

“Only if you rule out the possibility of miracles before you even look at the text. Remember, if there is a God, then miracles are possible.”

“Yeah, yeah, but miracles are extremely rare. It is far more likely that someone will lie or embellish than that a miracle would actually happen.”

### **3. Were the writers telling the truth?**

“I agree. A miracle would require tremendous evidence to prove

it was true. And I think that is what we have in the New Testament. Which brings us to the final test: Can these writers be trusted to be telling the truth?”

“You tell me, Mr. Expert.”

“There are several ways to check out an author’s truthfulness. I’m going to give you six of the reasons that convinced me that the Gospels are fact, not made-up legends or embellished history. First off, **the writers include embarrassing details about themselves.** I don’t know if you’ve read the Gospels, but they make the disciples look like dim-witted cowards – the disciples who were supposed to be the respected leaders of the early church. I mean, these guys were given authority by Jesus to guide the church. Don’t you think that, if the Gospels were propaganda fabricated to further the church’s agenda, there would be an effort to sanitize the disciples and paint them as heroes?”

“And you are saying that the Gospels don’t paint them like that?”

“Hardly. The week before Jesus dies, His disciples bicker about which of them is the greatest! When Jesus is arrested, the disciples abandon him and go into hiding. Peter, who later became one of the main church leaders, denied that he even knew Jesus.”

Frank put his rod down and reached for his tackle box. “Skip, there is an inferiority complex associated with lying. When you’re trying to convince someone of something untrue, you try to boost your credibility by making yourself look good. But the Gospel writers were brutally honest about their shortcomings and failures.”

“That is a good point,” I said. So good, in fact, that I pressed Frank to tell me the next point while he tied another lure on his line.

“**The Gospel writers include demanding sayings of Jesus** – things that are extremely hard to obey. Jesus says that divorce wasn’t permissible except in rare instances, that we should turn the other cheek when assaulted, and that we should love our enemies. If you are trying to fabricate a message that sells well, you are certainly going to erase such demanding sayings. When you look at man-made religions, sex is usually a selling point: Mormons permit polygamy, Muslims promise a sexually erotic heaven, but the Gospels record Jesus warning that whoever even *looks* at a woman with lust commits adultery and the New Testament overall is very strict that sex should be saved only for marriage. The only reason I can see for the writers keeping these in the Gospels is because they were committed to telling the truth.”

“I’m not quite convinced by that, because Islam has demanding sayings and I wouldn’t say that makes it true.”

“I’m not saying that Christianity is true or that Jesus is God just because He said demanding things. I’m merely pointing out that if the writers felt free to fabricate, they would have likely left out the things that make Christianity hard to sell. The next compelling reason for me is

that **the writers recorded difficult-to-understand actions and sayings of Jesus**. Skeptics like to paint the idea that the church has tampered with the Gospels to make it look like Jesus thought He was God. But take a good look at the Gospels: Jesus admits He didn't know when He would return to His earthly church, He claims that the Father was greater than Him, He's unable to do miracles in certain places, and He even asks the question, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God.' Now, all of these things *can* be explained by proper interpretation, but if the church felt free to tamper with the words of Jesus to make it sound like he was claiming deity, they certainly would have also felt free to remove these difficult quotes and actions that seem contrary to their claim that Jesus was God."

"It seems to me that these difficult things prove that Jesus wasn't God and that the deity passages were added in later." I was really getting into this stuff, and had nearly forgotten about fishing.

"They only prove that Jesus was fully man as well as fully God. **The writers are very careful to distinguish Jesus' words from their own.** In the first century, several raging controversies threatened to split the early church: Is circumcision necessary for salvation? Can a woman speak in church? How should tongues be used? But the amazing thing is that Jesus never addressed any of these issues in the Gospels. If the writers had been fabricating a puppet Jesus, they'd have most certainly put words in His mouth on these issues and so dealt with them once for all."

"Wait. Aren't you just making an argument from ignorance?"

"No. I'm putting forth a hypothesis and seeing if it fits the data. If it doesn't, the hypothesis needs to be changed. But the hypothesis that the writers put words in the mouth of Jesus is a groundless assertion and doesn't fit the data. Let's move on to another reason – "

"You just never run out of reasons, do you?"

"And you never run out of objections, do you?" I shrugged. Frank went on, "When evaluating a historical document, historians often use **the hostile witness test**. If you can find records of the 'enemy' verifying the story, it really adds weight. Enemies aren't positively biased, so if you can get an enemy to say the same thing, that is pretty firm proof."

"I'm not sure I'm tracking with you completely."

"By claiming the that Jesus' disciples stole His body from the tomb, enemies of Christianity are essentially admitting that the tomb really was empty. If it weren't, these enemies would have gone and produced the body. Jewish sources also say that Jesus was an evil sorcerer, which proves that Jesus *did* work miracles. There are many other evidences that the writers were telling plain, unembellished truth. They encourage their readers to verify their story. They give names of prominent people and well-known places. They use plain, simple language. But the reason, last of the six I've explained, that ultimately clinched it for me, was that

**many of the writers and source witnesses died for the beliefs that they include in the Gospels.** If the writers had been making things up, they wouldn't have died for what they knew to be a lie."

"Well, maybe they didn't *purposefully* lie, but don't you think it's possible they were so passionate about Jesus that their memories played tricks on them and led them to produce biased journalism so to speak?"

"Not all passion drives a person to embellish. Sometimes your passion for what you are writing makes you extra careful when you record the facts. Look at the people who survived the Jewish Holocaust – they are certainly biased in their reports of what happened, but because they don't want the world to forget the atrocities, they are extra careful with detail so that they get their point across. And I think it is exactly the same with the Gospel writers."

### **What about the contradictions?**

"But what about all the contradictions in the Gospels?"

"The so-called contradictions aren't as many as you might think. Actually, slight divergences in the accounts are good evidence that these are independent reports of an actual event. If the Gospels had all been exactly alike, the skeptic would accuse the writers of conspiring together. But all the contradictions can be resolved when you take into consideration that the Jews often recorded history topically and for the purpose of teaching. It wasn't always chronological. Plus, writers felt free to give summaries of what a person taught, while preserving the essence of that teaching. Do you have any specific contradictions you're wondering about?"

"No," I said sheepishly.

Frank started putting his lures away while I fired up the motor and headed for shore. "Skip, what I've discovered in my research is that the New Testament has been remarkably preserved for us. The text is very reliable by the historian's standard. The Gospels were written by first- or second-hand sources within twenty to forty years of the resurrection – far too little time for legend to creep in."

"So you said before."

"Finally, there are several factors indicating that the writers were very careful to produce meticulously truthful accounts. You told me that the only way you could avoid Paul's arguments was to reject the existence of God and the reliability of the New Testament documents, right? But if you really wrestle with the evidence, I think you will find that God does exist. It follows, then, that He would want to communicate with us. The surest way to do this would be for Him to become a man. And if this happened, you could be sure that the evidence proving it would be supernaturally preserved." Frank paused to let it all sink in. "And that is *exactly* what we find in the historical record of Jesus Christ, His life and resurrection. All of it is far more reliable and verifiable than record of

any other person from ancient history. Not only did God become a man, but He also ensured that this all-important event was well marked. We even date our calendars by this event. But God also has written a book to communicate to us. Language is the clearest way to reveal the truth.”

The gavel was coming down on me. The avalanche was full-blown now, and inescapable. I still fought to escape, “But how do you know that the Bible is God’s word and not the Koran or some other holy writings?”

“Because when Jesus became a man, He endorsed the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Through Jesus, God verbally gave His endorsement of the one truly divine written revelation of Himself.”

### **Using the Bible to prove the Bible is circular reasoning**

“Hold it. You’re using the Bible to prove the Bible! Isn’t that circular reasoning?”

“No. In proving to you the truth of Jesus Christ, I started out with the premise that the New Testament was an ordinary, historical document, *not* that the Bible was infallible. I demonstrated that if you test it like any other document, it’s very reliable. The New Testament, at this point, is like a generally reliable set of binoculars with which we can look at the person of Jesus Christ. He claimed to be God and demonstrated it by living a sinless life, fulfilling prophecy, and miraculously rising from the dead. Since we know that this man’s words have been carefully preserved, we can know with confidence what he actually said. And Jesus Himself said that the Scriptures were infallible. The Bible has the endorsement of God and the endorsement of the miraculous. The reasoning isn’t circular. But there are other divine fingerprints on the pages of this holy text.”

“Like what?”

“You will have to do the research on these yourself, but I’ll highlight a few. Take fulfilled prophecy, for starters. Then there’s unity of themes despite the fact the Bible was written by more than forty different authors over fifteen hundred years on three different continents. This is strong proof that there was one mind behind it all. One archaeological discovery after another has verified the text. Finally, the Bible has been indestructible: Professor and dictator alike have tried to destroy the Bible, yet it perennially remains the worldwide bestseller. I know you can challenge each one of these. I used to myself. These are not infallible proofs, but they do strike me as interesting characteristics that set the Bible apart from every other book.”

### **What about the cruelty of the Old Testament God?**

Frank’s spiel reminded me of something that’s bothered me for years. “But what about the wickedness and cruelty of God in the Old Testament? I can’t believe in a God like *that*.”

Frank nodded. “I admit that the Old Testament passages are at first blush hard to understand. But a person’s actions can only be judged in context. I also know that Jesus Christ is the clearest revelation of God.

He is kind, loving, compassionate, merciful, a man full of integrity. God is good, and when we understand the whole picture, it will make sense. But it is foolish to reject the existence of someone just because you don't understand him. Can you imagine someone saying, 'Our Prime Minister is the most egotistical, conceited person on the planet – that is why I don't believe he exists.'

I had to laugh. "I see your point, but I'm still uncomfortable with the actions of God in the Old Testament."

"Fair enough. How can I make things a little clearer? Ummm... Well, the more I seek God, the more I realize that God is not only the standard of goodness but the source of it as well. God is good, Skip. Not only did He enter and transform history to show His amazing love for His creation, He also offers to enter and transform your life. He did it to mine."

He had me there. Never had I seen a man so changed, so – so vital and living for something that, the more I heard about it, made a lot of sense.

"I was on the edge, feeling empty and alone," Frank said. "You know the notorious drinking problem I had – it ruined my marriage and almost my career, as well. But when I was at the end of myself, I cried out to God. I admitted that I couldn't make it alone. I needed a Savior. God answered, Skip. He broke into my life in a powerful way. He changed me. My life took on new meaning and purpose. I felt *whole* again. Worshiping God has satisfied my deepest longings. It fills me in a way that makes me want to shout 'I was made for this!'"

### **Religious experience can't prove God**

I had to look away. The intensity, the naked joy on Frank's face was stripping away the last of my defenses. Longing and cold cynicism fought inside me. I burst out, "Frank, religious experience can't prove there's a God. Psychology has an explanation for your experiences. I even read how part of a person's brain is affected he claims to have an experience with God."

"You're still assuming there is no God, and then interpreting all the evidence in light of that assumption. If you want evidence, Skip, you will have to put aside your preconceived notions and *then* try to interpret the facts. If you've made up your mind that there is no God, you will never be convinced. I know you don't think too highly of the current U.S. president and you wish he'd disappear, so let's say you are debating someone about whether the president's really in the White House, or if he even exists. You're convinced that the president is absent and you doubt he exists, so you challenge your friend to prove the opposite – that the president's really there. Your friend argues that the White House just released an official press release stating that the President met with Steven Harper in the Oval Office."

"Such a report would definitely be suspect. I doubt George Bush

even knows who Steven Harper is,” I laughed.

Frank smiled. “Anyway, you remind your friend that the White House Press is notorious for deceiving the public and that it’s likely the report is a sham. Since you provided an alternative explanation, the evidence is dismissed. Your friend then tries to prove his point by saying that he saw Air Force One fly into Washington, and the president escorted to his limo. But you again give an alternative explanation and reject his claims. Frustrated, your friend uses his pass to take you inside the White House – right to the Oval Office doors, and again tries to prove that the President exists by pointing out that you can hear his voice. You object, saying that the voice can also be accounted for by other explanations – perhaps there is a tape recorder playing.”

“It wouldn’t be the first time there was a tape recorder in there,” I broke in.

“Anyway, you insist your friend has still not proved his point. Finally, your friend leaves you and enters the office. After a few minutes, he comes back and offers the ultimate proof: he said he just shook hands with and talked to the president. But you again dismiss him by saying that perhaps he just saw some kind of holograph or was maybe even lying to support his presupposition. You think it is far more likely that your friend is lying than that the president really exists. And when you consider all the ways the White House has messed up by burying the country in debt and launching the war in Iraq, you are even more certain that there isn’t an intelligent cause – namely, the president – behind it all.”

“Amen, *amen*,” I said with conviction.

“Your friend tries one last time. He offers to have you meet the president. But the caveat is that you must undergo a security check before you are allowed in. You refuse it, insisting that if the president really existed he would come out of that office himself. You see, Skip, just because you have an alternate explanation for the proof that theists offer for God, doesn’t change the fact that these things really point to God. Millions of believers have experienced God. This doesn’t prove conclusively that there is a God, but if there was one, this is exactly what you would find to be true.”

“But it still isn’t conclusive.”

“Let me go back to my illustration for a minute. Suppose you decided that you really wanted to know for sure whether or not the president you existed. So you agree to the security check and in a few minutes you are shaking hands with the most powerful man in the world. Meeting the president in person has removed all doubts.”

We were within sight of the shore. I shut the motor off and let the boat float quietly on the sunlit water. “Frank, your story is intriguing, but misleading. I think you just committed the faulty analogy fallacy. The president is a real person. So maybe I’ve said he wished he’d disappear, but no one actually doubts his existence because they have seen pictures



and heard him on the radio. There are no pictures of God. No one has ever seen him.”

“That doesn’t prove He isn’t real. No one has seen God because He is by nature invisible. This isn’t a deficiency in His attributes but because He isn’t limited by space and matter. But people saw God when He took on human flesh. God isn’t only just some intelligent cause, or Uncaused First Cause. He is also a *Person* - a Person who is inviting you into a relationship with Him. Just like you couldn’t meet the most powerful person in world on your own terms, you certainly can’t meet the most powerful Person in the Universe on your terms. God requires that we humble ourselves and admit our dependency on Him before He reveals Himself further.”

“Are you saying that God is making it difficult for people to believe He exists?”

“No, don’t get me wrong, He has offered more than enough proof for any thinking person who wants to know the truth to believe that He exists. I’ve shared a lot of it with you – enough to fill a small book – but there is a vast difference between *knowing* that God exists and *knowing* Him personally... knowing His heart, knowing what pleases Him and what makes Him weep.”

### **Why doesn’t God give us more proof?**

I gazed thoughtfully over the sparkling ripples of the water. “If God exists and He really wanted a relationship with us, why didn’t He give us more proof?”

“Skip, what more proof could God give us than He already has? He gave us minds to reason. He gave us logic so we could recognize the laws of cause and effect that point to him. He wrote the moral law on our consciences. He created us with a need for Him. He put a divine fingerprint in the DNA of every living cell. He has preserved the accounts of His life on earth. He calls to us through the beauty of creation. What more could He have done?”

“Why doesn’t He write in the sky ‘I EXIST’?”

“If He did, you could still reject it as a fluke of nature or a hallucination.”

“Yeah, true. Then why doesn’t He speak audibly to us?”

“One last example: Let’s say you move to a new neighborhood and your new neighbor is in your face every day. He’s always calling you to come over, knocking on your door at all times of the day, constantly leaving messages on your answering machine. Now you wouldn’t doubt that your neighbor exists, but would you want to have a relationship with such an obnoxious person?”

“Absolutely not.”

“You see, for any relationship to survive, there has to be the freedom to walk away, because forced love isn’t true love. When a man falls in love with a woman – and I’m talking about when he feels true

love not just sexual attraction – what he really wants is for the woman to choose to love him in return. This mandates that he leave space and give her room to decide.”

“But a smart lover doesn’t stay hidden, though,” I waggled my finger. “He writes love notes and sings sappy things, and invites the girl on dates, and showers her with gifts.”

Frank paused and looked at me funny. “Skip, that was beautiful, but strange coming from you. You don’t strike me as the romantic type.”

I chuckled. “Skip Tecke is a man of many, many talents – romantic lover being at the top of the list.”

“Then you will understand why God has done what He has done. God has written us love notes. They are called the Bible. He sings to us in skylines of stars and sunlit lakes like this one. He’s showered us with good gifts. For the person who chooses to seek God, there is an abundance of proof. And like in the illustration of the president, once you meet God personally, all doubts are removed. God has given us enough proof, but the amazing thing is that He has kept back enough of Himself to make true love possible. If God were any more obvious, we humans would be overwhelmed. It would be very difficult for us to choose, un-coerced, to love God. However, God has revealed that those who seek him in this life will be rewarded with a deeper, more intimate love in the next life. It’s similar to when a man and woman freely choose to love each other, marry, and enter the most intimate of all earthly relationships.”

I had that deep stirring again – that longing for meaning. Normally I drowned this feeling with a cold one – okay, a pack of cold ones. But this time I had far more than a longing for meaning. I longed for God. *I wanted to believe in God.* That shocked me as much as it relieved me.

Frank shut his tackle box and looked me in the eye. “Skip... friend, I can relate to your doubts. Don’t forget I was a staunch atheist. I wanted no part of God. But God continued to gently pursue me, and finally His love broke through. Now when I look at my relationship with Him, I wonder how I could have ever doubted His existence. For me to doubt whether God exists would be – well, sort of like a trout doubting the existence of water. I desperately need God. I see my need for Him clearer than ever. Apart from God I couldn’t draw my next breath. He is the reason my heart continues to beat.”

He looked out over the lake, “But even more than physically, I need Him spiritually. I am nothing apart from God – a meaningless fleck on a dirty, swirling planet. But God’s love has filled my life with meaning and purpose. I see what Augustine meant when he said that ‘our hearts are restless till they find their rest in God.’ I don’t ever want to try again to live this life apart from the Source of all life. As a county judge who saw that many atheists lived better lives than Christians, I was annoyed

by Christians' claims that we couldn't be good apart from God. But now I see that in order to know what is good, we need to understand our purpose... I know I must be wearing out your ears, but stay with me a bit longer, Skip. Before we can judge a good watch from a bad one, we need to know the purpose of a watch. If we humans don't know our ultimate purpose, how can we even know what good is? We need to understand why we are here. For an atheist, there is no ultimate purpose, so there is no objective, meaningful way to measure good from bad."

### **The purpose of life – a relationship with God**

I was silent. The inner turmoil was tremendous. "So what do *you* believe our ultimate purpose in life is?" I asked, all skepticism gone.

Frank looked back at me. "I want to make it clear that it doesn't matter what I believe. It's not my opinion that counts. But I do believe that God has revealed that one of our most important purposes in life is relationships. I see this in His Word, but I also see this lived out in society. Time and time again people realize late in life, if not earlier, that it is relationships that truly matter, and not fame, wealth or power. What I have come to see is that the most important relationship anyone has is with his or her Creator. If that is severed, life eventually becomes hell."

"Do you really believe that? My relationship with my 'Creator' has been severed and I wouldn't exactly say my life is hell." Although, inside I had felt that way many times.

"Not hell yet, maybe. God continues to mercifully give gifts and sing love songs to those who have rejected him. He loves his creation deeply and keeps on pursuing us. But God is the Source of life, love, goodness, and beauty. The worst thing that can happen to any human is to have God grant his or her wish to be left alone. Hell is miserable because it is separation from God. We need God desperately, Skip. It is so easy for me to fall into a trap where I take God and His gifts for granted. Then I hit a patch of rough road, or tragedy strikes and I see just how much I need Him. Before I became a Christian I drowned my need for Him with alcohol. Now I am satisfied through worshiping my Creator. Instead of taking God's gifts for granted, I take them with a grateful heart. My relationship with God means everything to me."

Frank laughed and looked toward the flat horizon of the lake. "I know it sounds funny for me to be using such religious language, since I used to think that Christianity was just an irrational crutch for the emotionally weak. But I have discovered that not only is Christianity intellectually fulfilling; it is also fulfilling at a much deeper level. Logic and science are valuable tools, but they are limited. They can't explain the wonder I felt when I fell in love with my wife or the transcendent awe of watching my little Gracie enter this world or the horrible grief after she was killed. Logic can't explain the feelings of ecstasy I have on a mountaintop, or the wild rush I get when I jog through the trees after a rain storm."

I was all wrapped up in what Frank was saying. He had me there – in that part about inexplicable feelings – and had me again when... well, when I thought about pretty much every argument he'd given. But it was the way he said it all, too, I guess, that grabbed me.

"No," Frank went on, "Christianity isn't irrational like I thought it was, but it does carry you, and I discovered that I was far weaker than I ever wanted to admit. But in the admitting of my weakness I have found a deeper strength. When I surrendered control of my life to my good and wise Creator, I found more freedom than I ever did in my rebellion."

He looked at me with that intense fullness, "Skip, I plead with you: Turn to your Creator before it's too late. I know these evidences for God can be rejected; there is no such thing as incontrovertible proof to a mind that doesn't want to believe. But I hope I've at least shown you that faith in God is every bit as reasonable, if not far more so, than rejecting the existence of God. Turn to *Him*, Skip! This life is too short, we know too little to know with certainty the things that are really important. But God became a Man. Jesus is God. As God his opinion is worth heeding. Of all the men that walked this planet, Jesus is the only one who conquered death, He is the only one who can restore our relationship with God."

"Why is Jesus the only one who can restore my relationship with God? What does Jesus have to do with it?"

"I ran from God because of guilt. When I thought of all the awful things I had done, I wanted to hide from God, just like I did when I was eight and broke my dad's windshield. My guilt severed my relationship with God. But Jesus took away my sins. He took the consequences on Himself. Jesus alone offers complete forgiveness of sins. Seek Him with all of your heart. A relationship with God as he revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is a treasure of unbelievable worth."

He stopped, embarrassed by the passion spilling out of him. Frank never was one for pouring out his heart, but everything he said just now riveted me. We were quiet the rest of way to the shore. I asked to be alone for a while.

I tied up the boat, and went for a walk along the shore, trying to process it all. I kept having this weird sense of a Presence nearby, but whenever I turned to see who was there I saw no one. My thoughts went back to Frank and his God. For the first time in years, I thought of God as a person, and I knew I had to talk to Him.

"God if you are out there, I want to know you. There is so much in this crazy world that doesn't make sense. I have heard a lot of dirty reports about you. But now I really want to know you." Suddenly the thought of approaching a Being who could create this universe out of absolutely *nothing* filled me with dread. Like I was standing on holy ground. Not caring if others saw me, I went down on my knees, painfully aware of how horribly small and bad I was. "God, I am nothing without you."

I said hesitantly, "God, please show your grace to me a simple

man. Show me who you are.” Once the words were out there, hanging in the air, I was filled with the most unbelievable sense of rightness.

Not all my questions have been answered, but I have met God and I know He is real. Do I understand all the evil in the world or why God’s people have done such a miserable job of representing God? No. I might never understand. Do I grasp God’s reasons for what He does? Hardly. But I guess that is what you would expect, since God is God, and I am not. And, honestly – that’s just fine by me.

For further research.

*I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist.* By Frank Turek and Norm Geisler

*The Case for Christ.* By Lee Strobel

*The Case for Faith.* By Lee Strobel

*The Case for a Creator.* By Lee Strobel





*“Hi. My name is Skip Tecke. Three years ago I had a conversation that ruined my life. I was leaving the studio after finishing my once very popular call-in radio show when I was approached by a small bald man. Said his name was Paul. We ended up talking for several hours and my little world got turned upside down.*

*“Ever since then, the things Paul said have been nagging at me. But I’ve got some reasons for rejecting his evidence that God exists, that the Bible is His book, and that Jesus Christ is God.”*

Is there a God? Did this complex, ordered, universe randomly explode from the bowels of nothingness? Are the New Testament documents reliable? Are they forgeries or corrupted history? Can we know what Jesus actually said?

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Jesse Jost lives in sunny southern Alberta with his beautiful wife Heidi and son John-Michael.

Since graduation Jesse has extensively studied church history and apologetics. He loves speaking to youth groups and camps about his passion to discover God’s truth and make it known.