



LEADER GUIDE



MEET THE



**SKEPTIC**

A Field Guide to  
Faith Conversations

**BILL FOSTER**



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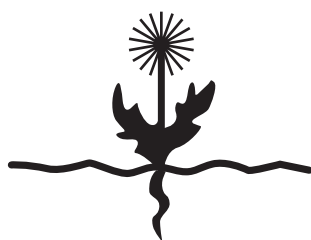
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# contents:

• BUILDING YOUR CURRICULUM	V
.....	
• WHAT IS A SKEPTIC?	4
• THINK IN 4 CATEGORIES	7
• CLARIFY WORDS	11
• SPIRITUAL SKEPTICISM	15
• MORAL SKEPTICISM	23
• SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM	31
• BIBLICAL SKEPTICISM	39





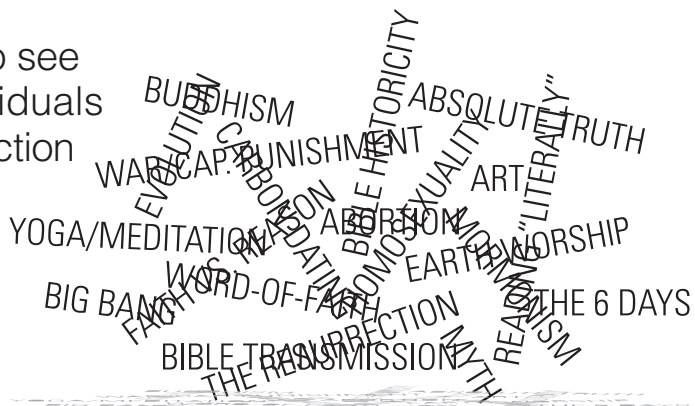
BUILDING YOUR **CURRICULUM**



## Where Do I Start?

So you recognize the need to equip your group to engage the worldviews of the culture but you don't know where to start?

In my experience, leaders tend to see study topics the same way individuals see objections – as a loose collection of unconnected ideas. They try to tackle them by choosing study topics in a piece-meal fashion without seeing the commonalities or connections between them.



The result is that their group may learn a few good pieces of information, but they don't see how this information fits into the larger picture.

The Meet-The-Skeptic approach emphasizes *understanding* over *data* – seeing the bigger picture behind a skeptic's objections rather than chasing down answers to every objection he raises.

## A Framework

The same 4-Category approach for conversations with skeptics applies to building a curriculum for studying worldviews. Just as the 4 Categories help organize one's thoughts for a conversation, they can help organize topics for curriculum (*facing page diagram*).

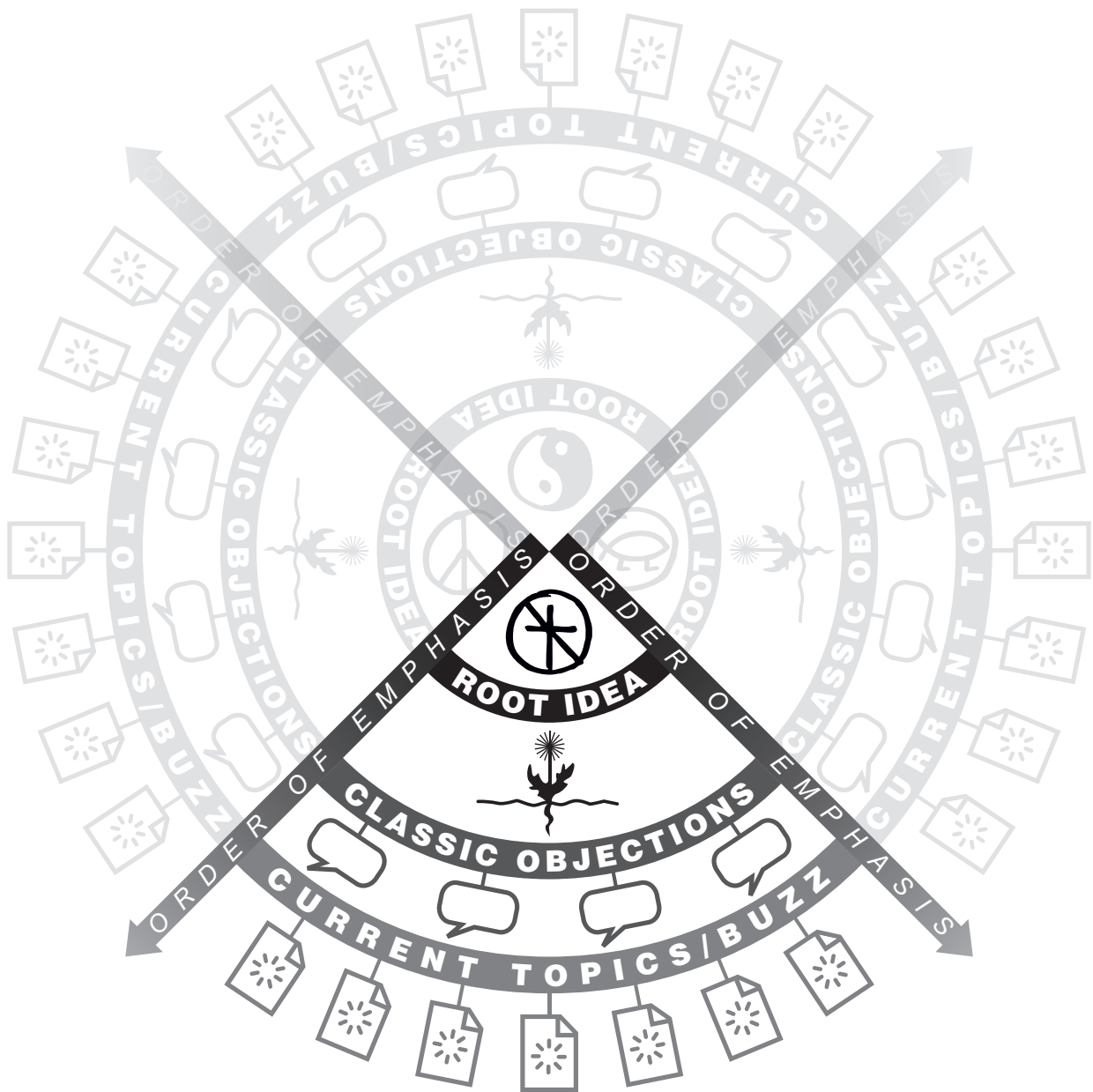
Instead of a loose collection of individual studies in which participants glean bits and pieces of information, the 4 Categories provide a framework into which the studies fit.

Participants can see how the topics they are studying fit into a larger worldview.

# The 4-Category Framework

Use the 4 Categories to organize and create a hierarchy for the topics you study:

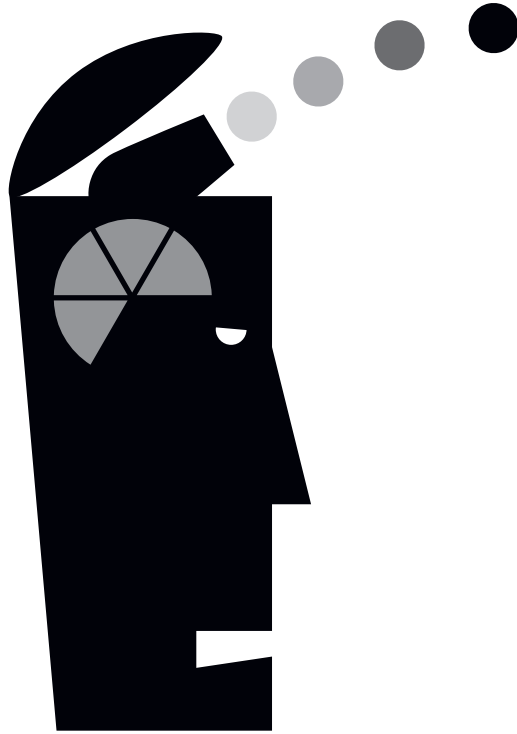
- 1) **The Root Idea** (big picture/presuppositions/worldview > THEORY)
- 2) **Classic Objections** (common expressions > PRACTICE)
- 3) **Current Topics** (recent examples > RELEVANCE)



*Example highlighting the hierarchy of the BIBLICAL category.*







WHAT IS A **SKEPTIC**



## WHAT IS A SKEPTIC?

someone who rejects the biblical worldview in favor of another way of seeing the world

## WHY ARE PEOPLE SKEPTICS?

- 1) parents - overbearing believers or non-believing
- 2) false Christians (TV evangelists, Christian-like cults)
- 3) non-believing experts (teachers, professors)
- 4) material comfort - don't need God
- 5) "hypocrites"

Skepticism is an *opportunity*! It shows us where the need for truth is.

## How Prepared Are You?

■ On a scale of 1-10, how prepared are you to answer the objections like the ones below?

<div data-bbox="315 1058 782 1230"> <p>"C'MON, YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH, DO YOU?"</p> </div>	(ready)
	10
	9
	8
	7
<div data-bbox="302 1352 691 1512"> <p>"MODERN SCIENCE MAKES GOD UNNECESSARY."</p> </div>	6
<div data-bbox="704 1239 1110 1411"> <p>"RELIGION IS THE CAUSE OF MOST OF THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS."</p> </div>	5
	4
<div data-bbox="730 1474 1117 1591"> <p>"THE BIBLE IS FULL OF MYTHS AND ERRORS."</p> </div>	3
	2
<div data-bbox="341 1608 808 1776"> <p>"HOW CAN YOU SAY YOUR VALUES ARE BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE'S?"</p> </div>	1
	(clueless)

■ What kind of objections do you think are the most difficult to answer and why?

[good opportunity for discussion here](#)

# What Should We Expect?

- Read the verses below and answer the questions about what to expect when engaging skeptics:

Who will listen to me?  
Their ears are closed  
so they cannot hear.  
The word of the Lord  
is offensive to them;  
they find no pleasure in it.  
- Jer. 6: 10

When you tell them  
all this, they will  
not listen to you;  
when you call to them,  
they will not answer.  
- Jer. 7: 27

**If God knew the people would respond this way, what did he gain by sending Jeremiah?**

*God gained glory for himself when truth was proclaimed - truth deserves to be declared regardless of how it is received*

<sup>32</sup>When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."  
<sup>34</sup>A few men became followers of Paul and believed.  
- Acts 17: 32,34

<sup>10</sup>As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup>so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.  
- Isa. 55:10-11

**How do these verses affect your attitude toward engaging people with truth?**

*we should have realistic expectations - the world is hostile to truth, so ridicule is expected; we should be happy when the truth is received even if only by a few we should know that none of our words for the cause of Christ are wasted*

<sup>24</sup> At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

<sup>25</sup> "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable."

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"  
- Acts 26:24-25, 28

- From the conversation above and the other passages on this page, which *two* options below best describe what mindset we should have when talking to skeptics?

- \_\_\_\_\_ **We should try to *CONVINCE* skeptics.**  
☒ **We should *SUPPORT OUR CLAIMS* to skeptics.**  
☒ **We should *COMMUNICATE TRUTH* to skeptics.**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **We should rely on *INTELLECTUAL ARGUMENTS*.**

*only the Holy Spirit can convince; intellectual arguments support the truth when the Holy Spirit opens people's eyes to see it*

# Game Plan

Without a plan, our conversations with skeptics are likely to become:

- A) **Games of fetch** in which the skeptic keeps the believer busy chasing down answers to his objections,  
or,
- B) **Ping-pong matches** that exchange superficial points until one side can beat the other with the sharpest response, or until both sides get frustrated and quit.

■ Have you experienced a situation like these? Describe it:

[good opportunity for discussion here](#)

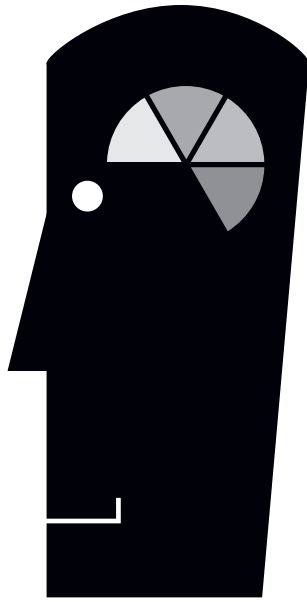
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...But we'll learn a different approach that will help send conversations in a more meaningful direction. This approach has the following three steps that we'll discuss in the coming pages:

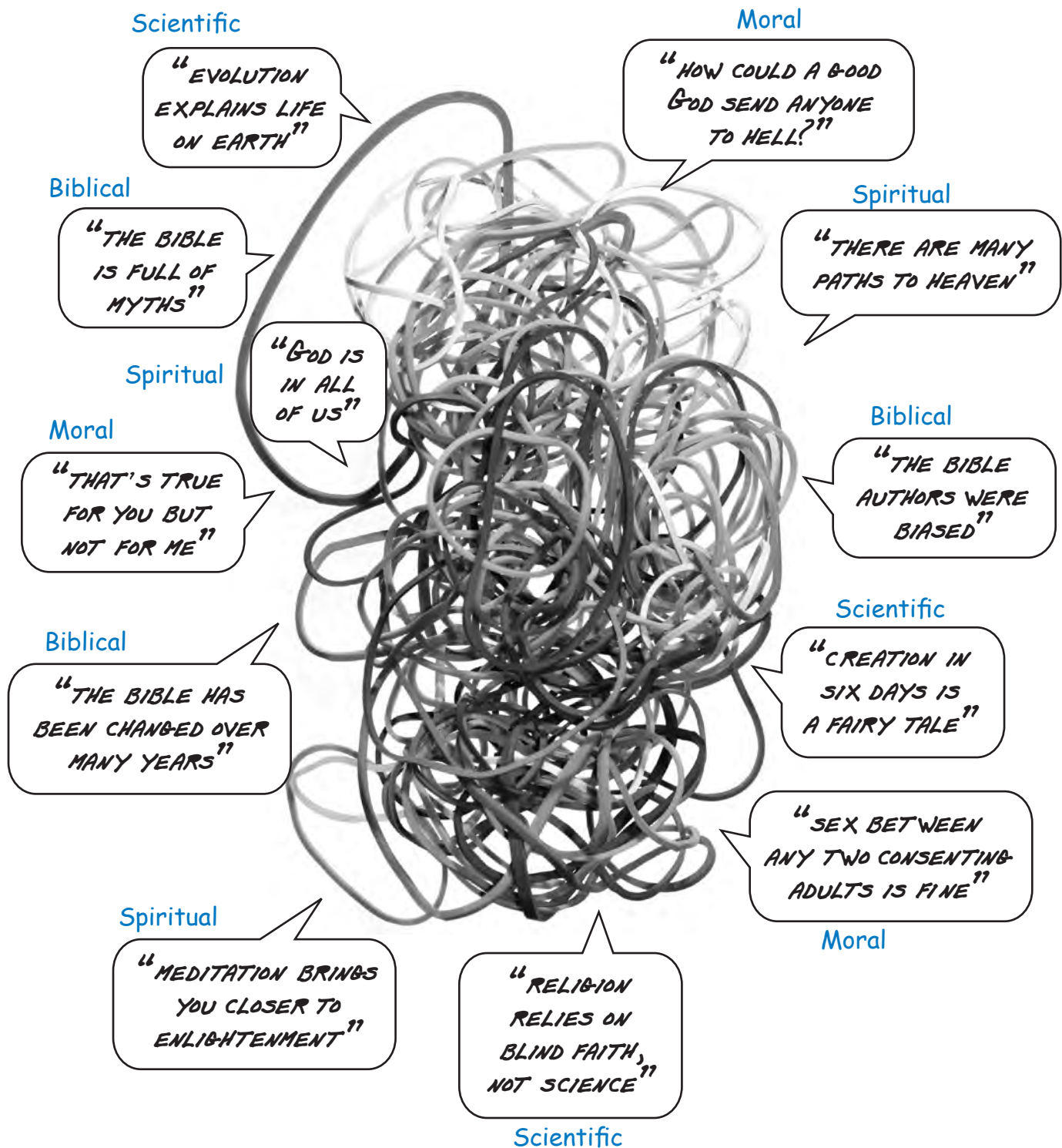
- 1) Think in 4 Categories
- 2) Clarify Words
- 3) Dig Up Root Ideas



THINK IN **4 CATEGORIES**

# Don't Get Overwhelmed...

A skeptic's objections to the biblical worldview can seem like a tangled mess that is nearly impossible to unravel:





## ...Rethink It!

However, objections have something in common (see below) that allows us to put them into groups:

- To which category does each objection on the previous page sound like it belongs?



**SPIRITUAL SKEPTICISM**



**MORAL SKEPTICISM**



**SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM**



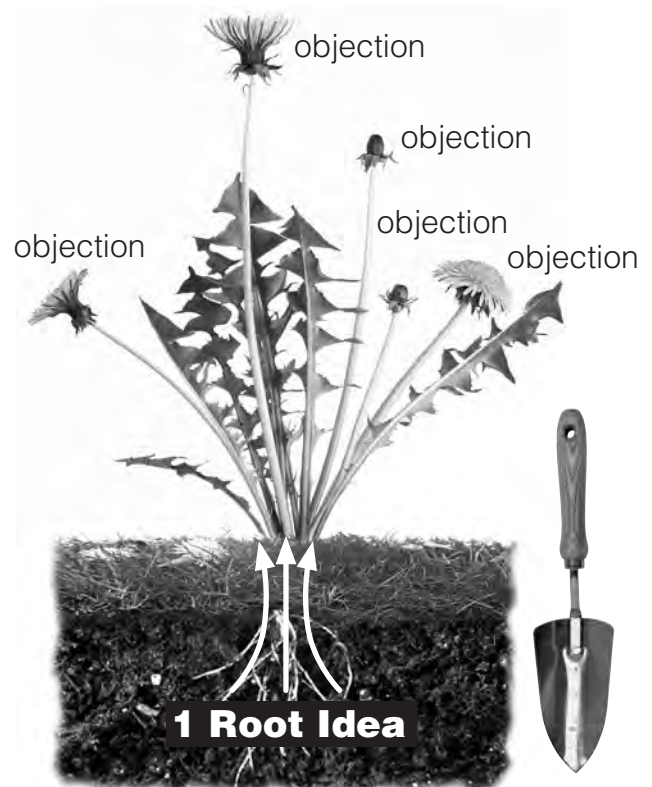
**BIBLICAL SKEPTICISM**



\*Sometimes objections sound like they belong to one category but actually belong to another, so we need to clarify them - p.12.

## Root Idea

- A Root Idea is the assumption or false premise\*\* that feeds objections a skeptic raises. It is like a root that feeds weeds sprouting from it.
- There is a Root Idea behind each group of objections. *We don't have to debate every objection (pull up all the weeds) if we dig up the root.*
- The key is recognizing what kind of objection the skeptic is raising so we'll know what questions to ask. The goal is to get beyond surface-level debates.

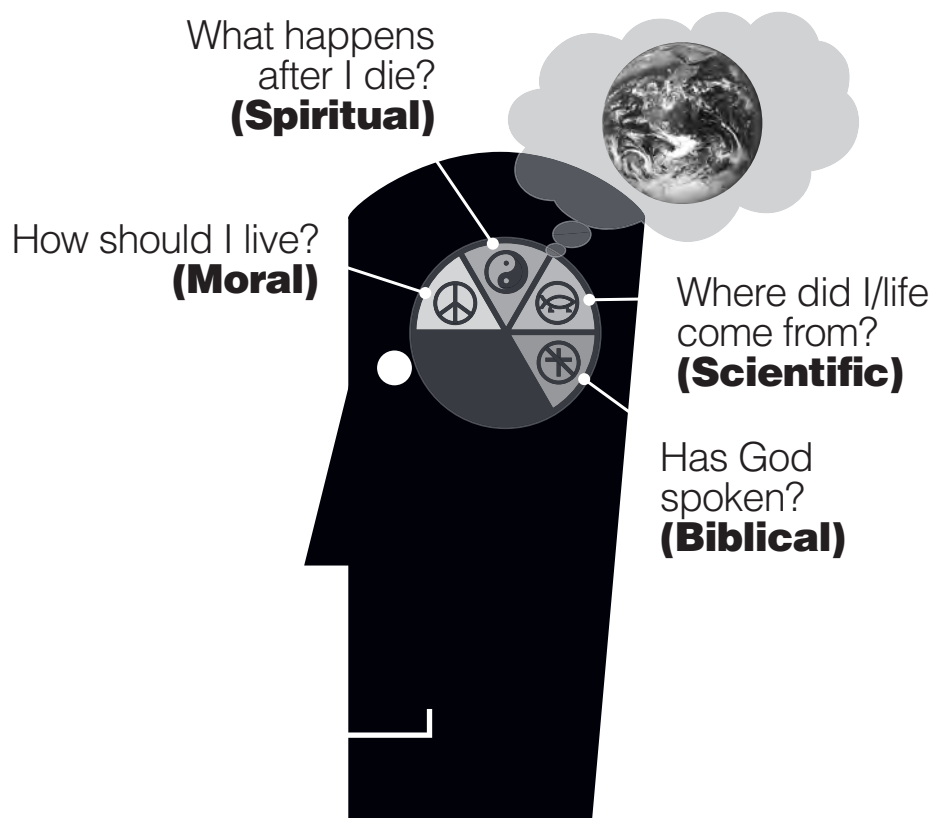


\*\*or presupposition

# 4 Parts of a Worldview

Together, ideas from the 4 CATEGORIES make up a person's total worldview, so when a skeptic raises an objection, we get a glimpse of how he sees the world.

Why four parts? Because eventually everyone asks life's big questions about the four subjects below:



■ How might a non-believer answer each one of these questions?

**How should I live?**

by doing whatever makes me happy

by doing good things

**What happens after I die?**

No one knows

I hope I'll go to heaven

I'll just decay in the ground

**Where did I/life come from?**

we evolved

**Has God spoken?**

who knows, there are many books

that claim to be from God



CLARIFY **WORDS**

# Ask Clarifying Questions

Below are some basic clarifying questions to ask first before you engage an objection. How would you complete them?

- *WHAT DO YOU* mean *BY THAT?*
- How *so?*
- *WHAT I HEAR YOU* saying *IS...*
- *DO YOU REALLY WANT AN* answer *?*  
(Be careful with your tone on this one.)

.....

<sup>17</sup>As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"  
<sup>18</sup>"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."

- Mark 10:17-18

**How does Jesus use a clarifying question in this passage?**

he asks, "Why do you call me good," and then gives an example of who is good

<sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" <sup>20</sup>"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." <sup>21</sup>Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

- Mark 10:19-22

**What wrong assumptions and attachments held by the young man did Jesus uncover?**

he assumes Jesus is just a good teacher (not divine) and that doing good/obeying

laws can get one into Heaven / Jesus exposes his attachment to material things showing that no one is good enough - they must rely on the perfection of Jesus himself

■ To which category does the young man's question belong? What would have happened if Jesus had just given him a straightforward answer? What do you learn from Jesus' attitude toward the man?

this is a SPIRITUAL question / if Jesus had answered him directly, he would have continued living according to his wrong assumptions / Jesus "loved him" - we should exercise grace whenever we attempt to relate truth (1Pet. 3:15)

# We should clarify *our own* words

Skeptics don't usually think in biblical terms, so the expressions we use in church or around fellow believers may not make sense to them.

To make sure our message is being understood, we need to clarify some of the common expressions we take for granted and speak in a non-churchy way.

■ Below are some expressions Christians often use. For each one:

- 1) Describe what a skeptic might think it means
- 2) Describe its true meaning in a way a skeptic could understand it

## p. 9-10 **"BORN AGAIN"**

Skeptic thinks: a religious fanatic who has had an experience that gives him purpose

True meaning: faith in Christ has changed me; I want to do what pleases God instead of what please me

## p. 10 **"FAITH"**

Skeptic thinks: someone who blindly believes anything his sacred book says

True meaning: belief in what we can not see that is supported by what we can see

## p. 16 **"PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST"**

Skeptic thinks: arrogant Christian thinks he's got a direct line to God

True meaning: settling for our own standards instead of living according to God's

## p. 17 **"SAVED"**

Skeptic thinks: "saved from what?" - a religious delusion

True meaning: trusting that Jesus' perfect life and sacrificial death satisfied the judgment of God that deserved because of my sin

## p. 18 **"SIN"**

Skeptic thinks: doing something really bad like murder

True meaning: settling for our own standards instead of living according to God's

# Red-Flag Words

Red-Flag Words are words skeptics falsely redefine. For example, if a skeptic said that you were being *“intolerant”* just because you disagreed with his view, stop there and clarify the meaning of *“intolerant”* because “to disagree” is not its true meaning. When we hear words like this, a mental red flag should go up alerting us that the skeptic is misrepresenting ideas.

**A Red-Flag words list is included at the end of each of the four category sections.** When you hear one of these words in a conversation ask, *“What do you mean by that?”* and then politely clarify its meaning.

- Jesus responded to a Red-Flag word when he encountered the rich young man in the passage from Mark 10 we discussed on p.12. What is it? “good”
- Identify the Red-Flag word in the exchange below. On the previous page you defined its true meaning and what skeptics sometimes think we mean by it. But what do Oprah and Shirley think it means here? Where did they get this idea? Where did the term originate?

## **Oprah:**

*“When you connected to the higher Self ...knowing that you can do anything that you want to do—is it what other people describe as being ‘born again’?”*

## **Shirley MacLaine** (nodding):

*“Yes, probably.”*

-The Oprah Winfrey Show<sup>1</sup>

---

*“born again” - ask your group to discuss what they think “connecting to the Higher Self” means / Oprah and Shirley probably got this idea from a new age guru / the term originates in John 3 when Jesus talks to Nicodemus*

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## **SPIRITUAL** SKEPTICISM



## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

SPIRITUAL SKEPTICISM involves questions or objections about the following concepts:

**WHAT GOD IS LIKE** (Ex. 34:6-7; Deut. 30:15-19; Ps. 50:21, 78:37-38; Isa. 55:9; Jer. 29:11 Jon. 4:11)

- List some ideas people have about God. How do they compare with what the Bible says about him in these verses?

*God winks at sin; God is like me, has my standards vs. God judges sin*

---

*God doesn't want me to have fun vs. God wants us to prosper*

---

*God wants to judge people & doesn't care about animals vs. God wants to forgive and loves his creation*

---

**OTHER RELIGIONS/CULTS** (Isa. 19:3; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:8; 1John 4:1-6)

- What belief systems strongly compete with Christianity in this country? Why are they appealing? What sources of false beliefs do these verses identify?

*Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Eastern religions (Buddhism); self-made*

---

*spirituality / they make people feel like they are contributing to their salvation;*

---

*don't require heart change / idolatry, false teachers, worldly "wisdom"*

---

**THE AFTERLIFE** (Luke 12:5; John 14:3; 1Cor. 15:51-53; 2Cor. 5:1-6; 1Thes. 4:17; Heb. 9:27-28; Rev. 21:3-4)

- What are some common ideas about the afterlife? How do they compare with what the Bible says in these verses?

*the afterlife is all my dreams fulfilled, where all "good" people go; it is a*

---

*non-physical spirit world; it is a never-ending cycle of death & rebirth / the*

---

*supreme benefit of Heaven is that it is a place Jesus prepared for us to fellowship with him forever; we will have renewed imperishable bodies*

---

**THE SUPERNATURAL** (Deut. 18:10-12; 2Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 5:20-21)

- Name some popular ways that our culture tries to connect with the supernatural? What does the Bible say about doing this? Why? What is the legitimate way to connect with the supernatural?

*meditation, yoga, seance, astrology, palm reading, mediums, ghost hunting /*

---

*the Bible forbids it because it communicates with forces of evil (demons, Satan)*

---

*and God wants us to trust him for guidance / prayer, reading Scripture*

---



# THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The Root Idea behind SPIRITUAL SKEPTICISM is:

**"Good works get you Heaven."**

.....

All religions and spiritual beliefs other than Christianity have this works-based Root Idea in common. This reflects the worldview of SPIRITUALITY.

.....

People want to get heaven\* by using their own power. However, we will see that spirituality is self-defeating because it relies on trusting one's own *flawed* works as the way to reach a *perfect* place.



## HOW IT WORKS

The following exercises will help you understand how SPIRITUAL SKEPTICISM works and how people use it.

### WHY BE SPIRITUAL?

"For countless ages, a goal of religion has been the salvage of the human spirit. Man has tried by many practices to find the pathway to salvation. He has held the imperishable hope that someday in some way he would be free."

- L. Ron Hubbard, Founder, Church of Scientology<sup>2</sup>

■ Do you agree with the statement above? Why does anyone want to be religious/spiritual?  
yes, although Hubbard's teachings as a whole are bizarre and misguided /  
people want to reach a state of existence higher than this one

■ What percentage of Americans claim to believe in God or some sort of higher power?<sup>3</sup>

50% - 60% | 60% - 70% | 70% - 80% | 80% - 90% | **90% - 100%** 92%

■ What percentage of Americans claim to be Christians?<sup>4</sup>

50% - 60% | 60% - 70% | **70% - 80%** | 80% - 90% | 90% - 100% 76%

■ What does Eccl. 3:11 mean and how does it relate to the percentages above?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Or whatever eternal destination they are trying to reach



## ⚙️ HOW IT WORKS (cont.)

### RELIGION vs. SPIRITUALITY

- What's the difference between religion and spirituality? Think about things like structure, requirements, expression, etc. Look at the two images below for help.



formal ordinances/rituals

part of a larger group

established doctrines



casual observance if at all

independent

pick & choose what you like

### STAIRWAYS TO HEAVEN

- The following are three examples of how other religions say a person can get to the ultimate eternal destination each is trying to reach:

**Mormonism** (Celestial Kingdom)- faith in Jesus Christ\*, repentance, sexual purity, tithing, honesty, saving ordinances for the dead, keep the Sabbath, church meeting attendance, among many others\*\*.<sup>5</sup>

**Buddhism** (Nirvana)- The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, 227 rules of discipline for men and 311 for women; many more rules for avoiding pitfalls and joining the order.<sup>6</sup>

**Islam** (Paradise)- The Five Pillars: profession of faith, ritual prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage plus an accumulation of more good deeds than bad deeds.

- How are they similar to Gal. 5:22-24? What is the key difference?

they are similar in that they are all good works that claim to honor their diety or tradition / the key difference is that the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians is a not a means for reaching Heaven, but a response to God having reached us

\*Clarify with a Mormon who he thinks Jesus is.

\*\*One LDS leader has counted over 4,300 commandments.

## START DIGGING

The following exercises will help dig up the flawed ideas of SPIRITUAL SKEPTICISM.

### ASK A PROBING QUESTION

If people are trying to reach a perfect afterlife, why would any standard short of perfection be good enough to get them there? Yet all religious and spiritual systems other than Christianity teach that the works of “basically good” people can do this. The trouble is they offer no assurance of what qualifies as good enough. So we need to ask the *Probing Question*:

### How good is good enough (to get you to Heaven)?

If “basically good” people are the kind who will populate heaven, how will heaven be much different than our current fallen world?

### IS “BASICALLY GOOD” GOOD ENOUGH

■ To help a skeptic understand why this standard isn’t good enough, ask him some questions like the following ones that you think will relate to his interests. Use the well known people, organizations, etc. that you think would interest him.

- *IS A BASICALLY GOOD STUDENT ACCEPTED INTO medical/law school ?*
- *IS A BASICALLY GOOD MUSICIAN SIGNED BY Sony, Simon Cowell ?*
- *IS A BASICALLY GOOD football PLAYER DRAFTED IN THE NFL ?*
- *IS A BASICALLY GOOD PROGRAMMER HIRED BY Apple ?*
- *IS A BASICALLY GOOD BUSINESSPERSON HIRED BY Donald Trump ?*
- *THEN WHY WOULD A BASICALLY GOOD PERSON BE ALLOWED INTO A perfect PLACE AND INTO THE PRESENCE OF A perfect God?*



## DIVIDING LINE

- There are many different religious systems and each has many different mantras, doctrines, and observances. However, we can divide them all into two groups—Christianity on one side and all other religions on the other. To quickly show a skeptic how Christianity is unique, draw a line to divide a piece of paper in half and walk them through this two-point comparison: (Fill in the blanks to complete the comparison.)

<u>RELIGION / SPIRITUALITY</u>	<u>CHRISTIANITY</u>
1. SAVED BY <u>good works</u>	1. SAVED BY <u>grace</u> THROUGH <u>faith</u>
2. JESUS WAS A <u>good teacher, prophet</u>	2. JESUS WAS / IS <u>God</u>

Actually, both sides rely on works. But since perfect works are required to reach a perfect place, only a perfect man can fulfill them.





## RED-FLAG WORDS

“Spiritual” and “religious” people often use Christian-sounding terms but pour new meanings into them. Clarify the meanings of the SPIRITUAL Red-Flag words in these statements:

### ***“BASICALLY GOOD”***

*“Bad people go to Hell and **BASICALLY GOOD** people go to Heaven.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: doing more good deeds than bad deeds; not committing murder

Why is this statement flawed?: everyone thinks they are a basically good person; this is a subjective standard; only a higher standard than human opinion is legitimate

### ***“ENLIGHTENED”***

*“Your own mind is the means of your **ENLIGHTENMENT**.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: becoming in touch with a higher reality

Why is this statement flawed?: How can a flawed mind be the means to an enlightened mind? Wouldn’t it get in its own way? We need a completely new nature, not new techniques (Jer. 17:9).

### ***“HEAVEN”***

*“Uncle George was no saint but I know I’ll see him in **HEAVEN**.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: the place where all basically good people go to have a good time

Why is this statement flawed?: it lowers the concept of Heaven; if nearly everybody goes there, how will it be different from this world; it serves the self not the Being who made Heaven possible

### ***“HOLY”***

*“This Buddhist temple is considered a very **HOLY** place in our culture.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: sacred because of tradition; supernatural power ascribed to a natural place or thing

Why is this statement flawed?: “Holy” suggests being above this world, so natural man can not really decide what carries supernatural importance, only God can. What evidence exists that God has done so with the place or thing in question?



## RED-FLAG WORDS (CONT.)

### ***"KARMA"***

*"I better pay back this loan - I don't want any bad KARMA."*

Skeptic's meaning: we should pay it forward or what goes around comes around

---

Why is this statement flawed?: a never-ending cycle of rebirths with no assurance of freedom; one must continually pay for the consequences of his own works

---

### ***"MEDITATION"***

*"I feel one with the universe when I MEDITATE."*

Skeptic's meaning: emptying the mind; connecting to a vague impersonal force

---

Why is this statement flawed?: You can't feel one with something that is impersonal. A Higher Power must be personal in order to relate to us which means activating the mind, not emptying it.

---

### ***"ORGANIZED RELIGION"***

*"I don't really trust ORGANIZED RELIGION - I sort of do my own thing."*

Skeptic's meaning: I don't trust a group of people who are no better than I am telling me what to do.

---

Why is this statement flawed?: Is organization the problem, or authority? How can you reach a higher place if you only follow your own rules? Aren't the unsatisfactory results your own rules the reason you are seeking religion in the first place?

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**MORAL** SKEPTICISM



## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

MORAL SKEPTICISM involves questions or objections about the following concepts:

**TRUTH** Do you think *absolute truth* exists? How would you define it?

yes - truth that is universal regardless of time, place, or consensus

- How do these verses describe truth? (Luke 20:21; John 8:31-32, 14:6, 18:37; Acts 21:34)  
Check the statements below that agree with these verses.

☐ *WE CAN'T KNOW TRUTH*

☐ *TRUTH ALLOWS US TO BE NEUTRAL*

☒ *TRUTH MAKES US CHOOSE A SIDE*

☒ *TRUTH IS NOT MAJORITY OPINION*

☐ *OPPOSING STATEMENTS CAN BOTH BE TRUE*

☐ *TRUTH CORRESPONDS TO OUR PREFERENCES*

☒ *TRUTH MAKES ENEMIES*

☐ *TRUTH RESTRICTS OUR FREEDOM*

**PEACE** (Isa. 9:6; Mat. 10:32-37; Luke 12:51-53)

- Since Jesus is called the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), how would you explain Mat. 10:32-37 and Luke 12:51-53? What is more important than peace?

Jesus is saying that the truth of his identity - God in the flesh - makes

people choose a side. Truth is more important than peace because real peace can not exist without it.



- What do you think this bumper sticker means?

Many will say, "let's all just get along," or "we should respect all beliefs"

It actually suggests that all beliefs are equally true and that there are no significant differences, only misunderstandings.

- What part of their core principles would each of these belief systems be willing to give up in order to get along with the others? Which ones would say that the other beliefs are just as true as theirs?

None of them would be willing to give up their core beliefs - that's what

makes them distinct - to suggest that they would is an insult to them. All believe that their way is THE way or they wouldn't be true believers. Even Hindus and peace activists think that eventually everyone must come around to their way of thinking.

**FAIRNESS/JUSTICE** (Lev. 19:15; Ex. 23:2; Deut. 25:13-15)

- What are some common things in society today that people claim is not fair? How do they determine that they're not fair? What do the verses above say we should avoid in order to be just?

some make more money than others; gay couples can't marry; some win

awards and others don't / according to their own standards or desires / no

favoritism based on wealth or poverty, what the majority says, or to gain an advantage in business

- What is the true standard for right or wrong? Be specific. (Deut. 32:4; Mat. 5:48; Heb. 6:13) Why are any of the 10 Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17) right or wrong?

not just "God" but God's unwavering character (Rock"); murder is wrong b/c

God is life-giving, stealing is wrong b/c God is . . . > have you group explain the other relational commandments this way

**FREEDOM/AUTONOMY** (1Cor. 6:12-13, 10:23-24)

- What are some things that the culture says people should be free to do that the Bible says we are not free to do? How does the culture determine this?

sex outside marriage; cheat if the situation warrants it; revenge; personal

expression of any kind / according to one's own standards or that of the majority

- In the verses above, describe the attitude and thinking that Paul is trying to correct. How would you answer a skeptic who defends someone's freedom to do what they want as long as it is in the "privacy of their own home and doesn't hurt anyone"?

the idea that there is no spiritual significance to anything we do - no one is

watching / we all pay a price for "private" sins: addictions, STDs, illegitimacy, etc. coursens society and have moral and economic impact

**THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Root Idea behind MORAL SKEPTICISM is:

**"People should decide for themselves what is right or wrong."**

.....  
This may sound like a reasonable idea until you apply it in real life. This worldview is MORAL RELATIVISM – morality is a matter of opinion – something can be "true for you but not for me."  
.....

Relativists want to liberate the world of "restrictive" absolute standards while at the same time making up their own standards that they expect others to respect. We will expose how this thinking is self-defeating and unlivable.



## HOW IT WORKS

The following exercises will help you understand how MORAL SKEPTICISM works and how people use it.

### RELATIVE TRUTH vs. ABSOLUTE TRUTH

- Which statements below rely on *relative* (internal/subjective) feelings or preferences for the truth, and which ones rely on *absolute* (external/objective) reality?

<p><i>"VANILLA ICE CREAM IS THE BEST DESSERT"</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>	<p><i>"SMOKING IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH"</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>
<p><i>"I'LL KEEP THE EXTRA CHANGE... THIS STORE'S PRICES ARE TOO HIGH ANYWAY"</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>	<p><i>"POOR PEOPLE DESERVE PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT BY OUR LEGAL SYSTEM"</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE    Lev. 19:15 + Deut. 15:7-8</p>
<p><i>"THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING IS IN NYC"</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>	<p><i>"POLYBAMY IS WRONG"</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>
<p><i>"ALL PEOPLE ARE CREATED EQUAL"</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>	<p><i>"WE SHOULD CELEBRATE DIVERSITY BY RESPECTING ALL PEOPLE'S OPINIONS"</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>
<p><i>"LOVING, HOMOSEXUAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE JUST AS HEALTHY AS HETEROSEXUAL ONES"</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>	<p><i>"IT'S OK TO ABORT YOUR CHILD IF IT WILL BECOME A FINANCIAL BURDEN"</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELATIVE    <input type="checkbox"/> ABSOLUTE</p>

good opportunity for discussion - have your group explain their answers above

### "TRUE FOR YOU BUT NOT FOR ME"

- When people use this statement, they are trying to create a moral loophole for themselves – a *relative* truth. But what would happen if they used this statement in these situations?:

- THEIR DOCTOR TELLS THEM THEY HAVE CANCER
- THEIR BOY/GIRL FRIEND SAYS THEY WANT TO BREAK UP
- THEIR BANK TELLS THEM THEIR ACCOUNT IS EMPTY
- THE PILOT ANNOUNCES THAT EVERYONE SHOULD FASTEN THEIR SEATBELTS
- A POLICEMAN PULLS THEM OVER FOR SPEEDING

they would find out that reality does not adjust to their preferences

- What does this tell you about how relative truth works with the important issues?

relativism fails when a decision really matters because it isn't real

- Is the truth that works best for everyone *created* or *discovered*? Why? Where does each kind come from?

discovered - b/c we find it in the real world outside, not from individually created preferences inside us, so it works equally for everyone



# START DIGGING

The following exercises will help dig up the flawed ideas of MORAL SKEPTICISM.

## ASK A PROBING QUESTION

We want the skeptic to question how his worldview (MORAL RELATIVISM) would work in the real world. So we need to ask the *Probing Question*:

### What is your standard for right & wrong?

He will likely respond, "My preferences," "My feelings," or "Society."

- Explain what is wrong with these answers. Who makes up "society"?

"society" is a poor standard b/c it just passes the decision to other people who have their own opinions - Are we willing to always follow the majority?


- Describe what society would be like if personal preferences were the standard of morality. Without a moral referee, who will eventually decide "right" and "wrong"?

society would be chaotic / eventually those with the most power would impose their view of "right" and "wrong" on everyone else

## APPLY THE STATEMENT TO ITSELF

Moral relativism relies on word twisting rather than reality. Sometimes instead of doing what people *ought* to do, they say things in a way that gives them permission to do what they *want* to do. But applying the skeptic's statement to itself can clear things up.

- With this in mind, *apply each statement to itself* (like example #1) and see if it still seems true:

1) *ALL TRUTH IS RELATIVE.*   
IS THAT A RELATIVE TRUTH?

2) *NO ONE HAS THE WHOLE TRUTH.*  
Is that the whole truth?

3) *THAT'S TRUE FOR YOU BUT NOT FOR ME.*  
Is that only true for you?

4) *TRUTH DEPENDS ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE.*  
Is that just your perspective?

5) *TRUTH SHOULD BE DECIDED BY EACH INDIVIDUAL.*  
Are you deciding that for me?

6) *NOTHING IS BLACK AND WHITE.*  
Is that black and white?

What happens when someone tries to deny that absolute truth exists?

In order to deny an absolute we must use an absolute.



## APPLY THE STATEMENT TO ITSELF: STAR WARS

■ Read this dialogue from *Stars Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith* between the good guy (Obi-Wan) and the bad guy (Anakin) and determine:

- 1) If the statement is *absolute* or *relative*
- 2) If each character demonstrates consistency in his own beliefs

Anakin: *"IF YOU'RE NOT WITH ME, YOU'RE MY ENEMY."*

☐ RELATIVE    ☒ ABSOLUTE

Obi-Wan: *"ONLY A SITH LORD DEALS IN ABSOLUTES.  
I WILL DO WHAT I MUST... ANAKIN, CHANCELLOR PALPATINE IS EVIL."*

☐ RELATIVE    ☒ ABSOLUTE

Anakin: *"FROM THE JEDI POINT OF VIEW!  
FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, THE JEDI ARE EVIL."*

☒ RELATIVE    ☐ ABSOLUTE

Is Anakin consistent in expressing his beliefs? Explain:

No - he first states an absolute to define his enemy, but then undercuts his  
standard of determining good and evil by saying that it's just his point of view

Is Obi-Wan consistent in expressing his beliefs? Explain:

No - he says that "Only a Sith Lord" uses absolutes, but then he uses two of his  
own: "I will do what I must" and "...Palpatine is evil"

## RED-FLAG WORDS

A relativist's argument stands or falls on his ability to reshape words to create his own rules, so our ability to clarify words is the key to defusing relativism. Clarify the meanings of the MORAL Red-Flag words in these statements:

### **"DIVERSITY"**

*"We should celebrate **DIVERSITY** and respect all opinions!"*

Skeptic's meaning: differences are good and interesting so we should consider all beliefs equally true

Why is this statement flawed?: cultural, philosophical differences etc. are good and PEOPLE should be equally respected, but not all ideas are equal > have group discuss

### **"EXCLUSIVE"**

*"How can you believe in Christianity—it's so **EXCLUSIVE**!"*

Skeptic's meaning: Christianity is too narrow to see that all views are equally true

Why is this statement flawed?: ALL beliefs are exclusive - even the belief that they are not! Christianity is no more exclusive than any other religion b/c in order to choose one belief system one must exclude others

### **"HATE"**

*"Opposing same sex marriage is just an expression of **HATE**."*

Skeptic's meaning: speaking against a person's "right" to do what they want to do

Why is this statement flawed?: Merely disagreeing with an idea is not the same as ill will toward a person, in fact disagreeing with a destructive idea can show love for that person.

### **"INTOLERANT"**

*"You're against a woman's reproductive rights? I can't believe you're so **INTOLERANT**."*

Skeptic's meaning: disagreeing with my point of view

Why is this statement flawed?: Disagreement is the foundation of true tolerance. (I we already agree, then there is nothing to tolerate) We show tolerance when we disagree with an idea yet respect a person's right to express it.



## RED-FLAG WORDS (CONT.)

### ***“JUDGING”***

*“Who are you to **JUDGE**?”*

Skeptic's meaning: being judgmental; unable to accept an idea or person that is different from one's self (Discuss Mat. 7:1-5 & John 7:24)

Why is this statement flawed?: Everyone makes judgments including the person who accuses you of “judging.” Making an evaluation based on the facts is not the same as pronouncing a judgment without them or while doing the very thing one is judging.

### ***“LOVE”***

*“Why don't you stop being judgmental and just **LOVE** people and let them be happy?”*

Skeptic's meaning: affection toward another that makes both people feel good

Why is this statement flawed?: Sometimes a person's well being is more important than their happiness. Complete love (agape) desires the greatest good for another regardless of how it makes them feel.

### ***“PROGRESSIVE (OPEN-MINDED)”***

*“Marriage is an outdated institution in our **PROGRESSIVE** society.”*

Skeptic's meaning: newer ideas are better

Why is this statement flawed?: Ideas that cause society to go backwards are regressive. Ideas have consequences that should outweigh whether or not they are in vogue.

### ***“TRUTH”***

*“People should just be **TRUE** to themselves.”*

Skeptic's meaning: whatever is true for me

Why is this statement flawed?: When internal standards/preferences bump up against reality (external truth, outside evidence), reality always wins.



**SCIENTIFIC** SKEPTICISM



## 🔍 WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM involves questions or objections about the following concepts:

### FAITH (vs. REASON) (Heb. 11:1; Rom. 1:20; John 14:11)

- A common objection is that science is *fact*-based and religion is *faith*-based. According to Heb. 11:1, what circumstance makes faith necessary? Why would faith apply to both religion and science? faith is needed when something is unseen / both

religion and science study things that are unseen or that occurred in the past

- How do Rom. 1:20 & John 14:11 refute the idea that biblical faith is *blind* faith?

they rely on what we can see (Rom. - creation; John - miracles) to support a belief what we can't see (Rom. - God's invisible qualities; John - Jesus' divinity)

### THE BIG BANG (Gen. 1:1-9; John 1:1-3; 2Pet. 3:5)

Very generally, the order of Big Bang events is: 1) a hot, dense concentration of matter inflated; 2) early stars formed; 3) our sun formed; 4) a molten Earth formed; 5) oceans formed.

- From the passages above, is the Big Bang theory consistent with the Bible? Explain:

No - the order of events is very different. The only way to make them agree is to dismantle the sequential wording of the text.

- In the sequence above, what does the Big Bang theory *not* explain?

where the concentration of matter came from in the first place

### EVOLUTION VIA NATURAL SELECTION

“**Microevolution**” – change within a kind of creature

“**Macroevolution**” – change from one kind of creature into another kind

— [ Cheetahs are the fastest land animal. One of their primary food sources is gazelles (also quite fast). If the population of gazelles in a given area started to dwindle, answer these questions about what might happen to the cheetahs: ] —

- 1) Which cheetahs in the group will likely catch enough food to eat? the fastest ones

- 2) What possible outcomes are left for the other cheetahs?

1) migrate to another area or 2) die

- 3) If the surviving cheetahs have offspring that repopulate the area, what advantage will this new population have that the original population didn't have?

it will be a faster group

- 4) Did this advantaged, “naturally selected”\* group arise because of *something lost* or *something gained* in the original population? Where did this advantage originate?

something lost - the slower cheetahs / from the genes the original population already had

\*“Natural selection” means some creatures are able to adjust to their environment and survive because of traits they possess. They are passively ‘selected’ by nature, not purposely selected by an intelligence.



## EVOLUTION vs. NATURAL SELECTION (Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25)

5) How does your answer to #4 support or refute the idea that natural selection “builds”<sup>\*</sup> more complex creatures from simpler creatures? Do the verses above support this idea?

Refutes it - natural selection streamlines a population by eliminating traits, it doesn't build anything / Genesis refutes natural selection “building” new creatures b/c each is created according to its kind

6) What best describes what has happened to the cheetah population?

☒ ADAPTATION   ☐ MICROEVOLUTION   ☐ MACROEVOLUTION   ☐ NOTHING

“microevolution” is a loaded term b/c it presupposes “macroevolution”

7) What would it take to change the cheetahs into another kind of animal (*macroevolution*)? (The answer to #4 may help.)

new genetic information, new DNA (which would be incompatible with its current DNA)

## SCIENCE (Gen. 8:5-11; Jdg. 6:36-40; Rom. 1:20)

■ From what you know about science in general, identify anything scientific about how information is gathered in the Bible passages above.

Noah repeats an experiment with two kinds of birds (raven to test if dead animals had appeared; dove to test for accessible vegetation) / Gideon repeated his test to prove the unnatural sign was from God / what we observe informs us of what we can't see

■ From the passages above, what are at least two basic components of scientific inquiry?

1) observation

2) repetition

## THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The Root Idea behind SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM is:

**“The natural world is all that there is.”**  
**(Nature can do supernatural things.)**

.....  
This worldview is NATURALISM – the idea that the source of the universe and of life is physical/material stuff. No supernatural cause is involved.  
.....

NATURALISM tries to separate *faith* from *reason* by claiming that: 1) Religious faith is not supported by reason and science, and 2) Science does not rely on faith at all. We will see that both statements are *false*.

<sup>\*</sup>Evolutionists also credit *mutation* (coding errors when genes are copied from one generation to the next) with helping natural selection to “build” new creatures as well.



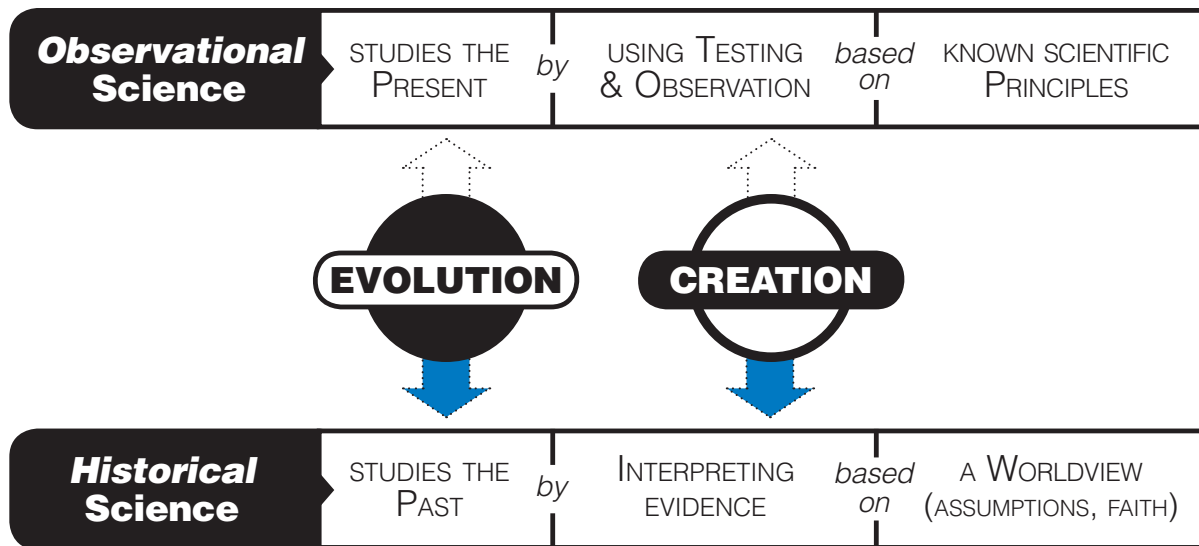


## HOW IT WORKS

The following exercises will help you understand how SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM works and how people use it.

### TWO KINDS OF SCIENCE

Many people think that if a scientist makes a claim, that it has been proven by observation and testing, but this isn't always true. There are *two kinds of science*; one is more suited to study the *present*, and one is more suited to study the *past*. Determine the best science for studying evolution and creation and fill in the corresponding arrow to indicate your choice.



- Which kind of science is the most accurate? Observational Science
- Do evolution and creation study the same evidence? yes
- From the diagram, what is the biggest factor that determines how these theories interpret the evidence and draw a conclusion? faith that one's presuppositions/assumptions/worldview is correct

### OBSERVATION OR INTERPRETATION?

For each of the following quotes from actual scientific articles, decide if the statement is an *observation* or an *interpretation*. Don't be intimidated by scientific jargon that is unfamiliar to you, just focus on whether the statement relies on what can be observed and repeated or relies on an assumption/faith. (Sometimes words that indicate uncertainty are a clue).

- 1) "... OUR FAMILY TREE INCLUDED SEVERAL SPECIES OF... UPRIGHT WALKING PRIMATES. ALL WERE COMPETITORS IN AN EVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE..."<sup>8</sup>
- ☒ INTERPRETATION   ☐ OBSERVATION

- 2) "BUT THERE'S NOW ONLY ONE SPECIES OF HUMAN ON THE PLANET..."<sup>9</sup>
- ☐ INTERPRETATION   ☒ OBSERVATION

- 3) "... PRIOR TO THE DELUGE, THE EARTH POSSESSED A PRIMORDIAL VAPOR CANOPY, IN SOME WAYS SIMILAR TO THAT SURROUNDING VENUS TODAY."<sup>10</sup> (Due to many holes, this is not a recommended explanation for creationists.)
- ☒ INTERPRETATION   ☐ OBSERVATION



## OBSERVATION or INTERPRETATION?

4) *"ONE REMARKABLE SKELETON... SUGGESTS THAT MODERN HUMANS AND NEANDERTHALS MAY EVEN HAVE MATED SUCCESSFULLY."*<sup>11</sup>

☒ INTERPRETATION   ☐ OBSERVATION

5) *"THESE REGULATORY GENES MAKE PROTEINS THAT ACT AS MASTER SWITCHES. ... THEY TURN ON OR SHUT DOWN OTHER GENES THAT ACTUALLY MAKE TISSUES."*<sup>12</sup>

☐ INTERPRETATION   ☒ OBSERVATION

6) *"WE BELIEVE, THOUGH WE CAN NOT YET PROVE, THAT OUR MULTIVERSE OF UNIVERSES IS ELEVEN-DIMENSIONAL."*<sup>13</sup>

☒ INTERPRETATION   ☐ OBSERVATION

7) *"GIVEN THE SMALL SKULLS... THIS SPECIMEN UNDOUBTEDLY HAD A PINT-SIZE BRAIN."*<sup>14</sup>

☐ INTERPRETATION   ☒ OBSERVATION

A small skull is direct evidence of a small brain, but "pint-sized" is a loaded term. The researchers have a preconception that this is a pre-human fossil. It might be the perfect sized brain for an ape.

8) *"WE MAY OWE OUR OWN DOMINANCE TO THE ASTEROID IMPACT THAT KILLED THE DINOSAURS 65 MILLION YEARS A.G.O."*<sup>15</sup>

☒ INTERPRETATION   ☐ OBSERVATION

9) *"THERE COULD BE A PARALLEL UNIVERSE HOVERING RIGHT OVER US PERHAPS INCHES, CENTIMETERS AWAY..."*<sup>16</sup>

☒ INTERPRETATION   ☐ OBSERVATION

## COMPLEX BY ACCIDENT?

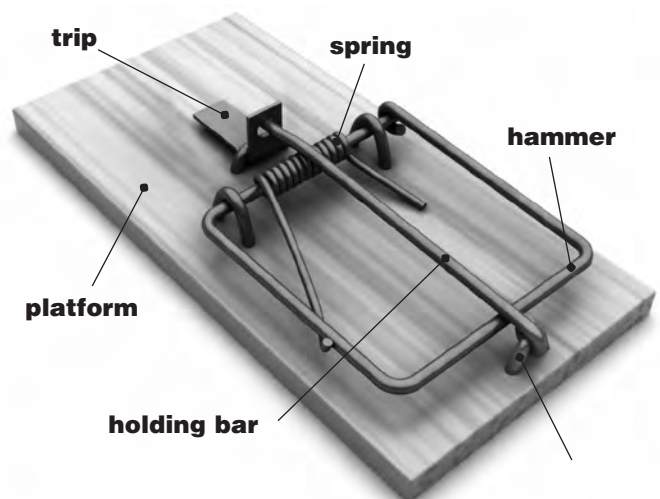
Naturalistic scientists say that complex living things evolved part-by-part from simpler organisms. Let's use the analogy of a mousetrap, a simple system, to evaluate this theory.

■ How many parts need to be present before it is capable of catching mice?  
all of them

■ What if all the parts were present but not in the right position – what would happen?  
it wouldn't work

■ If the mousetrap were a living thing, how would nature handle the parts that were not in a working position? (See cheetah discussion p. 32)  
it would "naturally select" them out

■ Could nature hold on to the parts until they were useful in the future? Why?  
No - it has no foresight to do so, only the ability to streamline (remove) traits



■ What would need to exist first to make sure potential parts are kept and to direct where each part should go?  
a plan/design



## THE WEIRD THING ABOUT INFORMATION

Naturalistic scientists say that everything can be traced back to a purely material/physical source. With this in mind, answer these questions:

- A) Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* is a concise, eloquent speech of only 9 sentences and about 250 words. It can be read in about two minutes. We can copy it on paper, transfer it to the internet, listen to it from an audio file, or chisel it in stone.
- B) Human DNA is a complex code that would fill 4,000 books of 500 pages each. It took scientists 13 years just to map it. The DNA molecule is made of chemical compounds, but its information can be expressed as letters (A, C, T, G) and transferred and studied in many forms (paper, electronic, etc.).<sup>17</sup>

- Because the information in the *Gettysburg Address* and DNA can be preserved in different physical carriers, what does this tell you about the source of information? How does it refute the naturalistic belief that everything has a physical cause?

that the source of information is not physical b/c it does not rely on any one type of material / information must come from something other than matter

- If we didn't know the origin of either of these examples, just by studying their attributes described above, what could we infer about the causes needed to produce them? How would these two causes compare to each other?

that the causes (intelligence) must be more complex than what they produce / An eloquent speech requires a sharp intellect; a vast code found in living things requires a vast mind.

## START DIGGING

The following exercises will help dig up the flawed ideas of MORAL SKEPTICISM.

### ASK A PROBING QUESTION

We want the skeptic to question how much his worldview (NATURALISM) relies on science and how much relies on blind faith. So we need to ask the *Probing Question*:

## How much faith is required for that belief?

He will likely object that his belief has nothing to do with faith but is instead based on science. However, we need to point out that *faith* is as central to the scientific skeptic's worldview as it is to ours, and that science and reason are integral to our beliefs as well. The real argument is not *faith* versus *science* but rather, *informed faith* versus *blind faith*.

- For practice, go back to the quotes in "Observation or Interpretation" (p. 34) and ask, "How much faith is required for that belief?" and judge how scientific they sound.



## RED-FLAG WORDS

We have already discussed aspects of some of these terms, but they are the foundation for most of the scientific objections you will face. Clarify the meanings of these SCIENTIFIC Red-Flag words:

### ***"BIG-BANG"***

*"Our universe is the result of the **BIG-BANG**."*

Skeptic's meaning: a self-caused/uncaused beginning of the universe based on the idea that objects are moving away from each other suggesting they were once together

Why is this statement flawed?: Something coming from nothing is irrational. Natural laws can't explain the Big Bang's cause because before the Big Bang, nature did not exist.

### ***"EVOLUTION"***

*"**EVOLUTION** is merely the ability of creatures to change over time."*

Skeptic's meaning: given enough time, many small changes add up to enough big changes to transform one kind of creature into another

Why is this statement flawed?: If a creature can adapt to its surroundings, it would not need to evolve. If it can not adapt, natural selection removes it.

### ***"INFORMATION"***

*"Over millions of years the **INFORMATION** in our DNA has accumulated at random."*

Skeptic's meaning: the order in living things that has accumulated over millenia makes them look as if they've been designed

Why is this statement flawed?: Information does not come from physical things (previous page). Without a plan to put parts or coded information together, only chaos will accumulate.

### ***"MUTATION"***

*"The right gene **MUTATIONS** can give a creature an evolutionary advantage."*

Skeptic's meaning: random genetic improvements from one generation to the next allowing an organism to move up the evolutionary ladder

Why is this statement flawed?: Mutations only degrade or rearrange information. Random copying errors do not create comprehensive new design plans.



## RED-FLAG WORDS (CONT.)

### ***“NATURAL SELECTION”***

*“An accumulation of **NATURALLY SELECTED** traits has built the complex creatures we see.”*

Skeptic's meaning: How nature builds successively more complex creatures. Creatures with adaptable traits survive and less adaptable creatures die out.

Why is this statement flawed?: Natural selection does not build anything. It streamlines populations of creatures for better survival in an environment by removing traits less suited for that environment.



## **BIBLICAL** SKEPTICISM



## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

BIBLICAL SKEPTICISM involves questions or objections about the following concepts:

### THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY (Mat. 7:29, 8:9, 9:6, 21:23; Luke 9:1; Rev. 20:4)

- From the verses above, define “authority.” Does the Bible have it? Why?

*the power to command and/or judge*

*> The rest of this chapter explains why the Bible is authoritative, but this is a good opportunity for introducing the idea through discussion.*

- How has our information-driven culture affected how we view sources of authority?

*Anyone can claim to be an authority on anything through a web site, blog, etc.*

*How do we know what sources we can trust?*

- On what basis could one sacred text have more authority than another to speak for God? What would it need to prove?

*It would need to prove that it had a supernatural origin.*

### THE BIBLE'S RELIABILITY (Luke 1:1-3, 3:1; Acts 26:24-26; 2Pet. 1:16)

Reliability concerns whether the Bible records events accurately and whether the text we have now is the same as the text of the original manuscripts.

- In the passages above, what evidence is there that the authors did not make up what they wrote about?

*Luke claims to write an accurate account and gives details to prove it; he records the reluctance of Festus to believe Paul; Peter appeals to being a witness not schemer*

- Describe the audience to whom Luke, Paul, and Peter are speaking. What does this say about the authenticity of these accounts?

*They openly recognize that some may not believe what they say, and record an example of this (Paul & Festus) yet they appeal to anyone who could dispute them.*

- Why do people accept the reliability of ancient writings by Homer, Aristotle, and Julius Caesar, yet question the Bible's reliability?

*The Bible makes bigger claims and challenges people on a personal level. No one has ever explained how to measure the reliability of an ancient document.*



## THE BIBLE'S RELEVANCE (2Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12)

Sixty-five percent of Americans believe the Bible “answers all or most of the basic questions of life.”<sup>18</sup>

■ Why don't more people (*only 9%*) have a biblical worldview when “biblical worldview” is defined as believing *all* of the following:

- [ 1) Absolute moral truth exists 2) Good works cannot earn a person to Heaven  
3) The Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings 4) Jesus lived a sinless life  
5) Satan is a real being 6) God is the all-knowing, all power ruler of creation<sup>19</sup> ] —

they see the Bible as a good but flawed self-help book, not an authority over their lives

■ Even if people think the Bible is relevant to their lives, what are some reasons they don't read it?

they think it's old and irrelevant; it's a thick and sometimes complex book; it

challenges them to change things in their life that they don't want to change

■ What do the verses above tell you about why the Bible is relevant today?

God is its source, therefore, he should know what is best for us. It is always

relevant because it understands and judges the human heart.

## THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The Root Idea behind SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM is:

**“The Bible is man -made.”**

.....  
This reflects the worldview of SECULARISM which says:

- 1) There is nothing eternal or sacred, therefore,
  - 2) Man's ideas are governed by the here and now.
- .....

The Bible is difficult to defend in a brief exchange because it is a complex book whose image in the non-believing world has been shaped more by hearsay than by firsthand inspection. A skeptic may object to a passage that he has never really studied because he has a preconcieved, tainted view of the Bible. He has no reason to think that it is any more authoritative than any other book. Therefore, we will see how to first begin reshaping his *perception* of the Bible.



## HOW IT WORKS

The following exercises will help you understand how BIBLICAL SKEPTICISM works and how people use it.

### READING THE BIBLE “LITERALLY”

Christians are often ridiculed for reading the Bible “literally,” but what does that really mean? Here’s an exercise to better define that term. Match the figure of speech on the left with the appropriate passage on the right.

#### Apocalypse

an imaginative, unnatural picture

#### Allegory

an extended metaphor

#### Historical Narrative

#### Hyperbole

exaggeration

#### Idiom

a cultural expression

#### Metaphor

#### Metonymy

substituting one word for a closely related word

#### Parable

#### Personification

#### Prophecy

#### Simile

Prov. 1:20  
personification

Mat. 13:3-9  
parable

Prov. 6:16  
idiom

Dan. 11:3-4  
prophecy

John 10:11-13  
allegory

Rom. 10:15b  
metonymy

Rev. 12:3

apocalypse

Jon. 1:17

historical narrative

Prov. 11:22

simile

Ps. 119:105

metaphor

John 21:25

hyperbole

- What did you learn from these passages about what it means to read the Bible literally?  
it means to read it as the writer intended, some things are figurative, some are not

### IS THE BIBLE A BOOK OF MYTHS?

“Sometimes Christian apologists say there are only three options to who Jesus was: a liar, a lunatic or the Lord...But there could be a fourth option—legend.” - Bart Ehrman, “happy agnostic,” Chair of the Dept. of Religion, UNC

- Read the following myth written in 2011 and answer the questions about it:

*I remember when 9/11 happened—it was a sad day. The NY Port Authority had decided that the Twin Towers were unsafe and needed to be demolished. After evacuating the buildings days earlier, the demolition crew set the charges and brought down the South Tower. But when the North Tower was detonated, it fell unexpectedly against 7 World Trade Center killing hundreds of people inside.*

- Without using modern technology, how could we confirm or refute this story?

by testimony from people who were alive to see it

- How long would it take for this myth to overtake the actual account? several generations (no more witnesses to refute it)
- How long after the resurrection of Jesus were the Gospels written down? 20-70 yrs.
- How does Mat. 28:8-15 support the Resurrection? What do the priests and elders not question?  
it shows a myth made up to cover the truth - no one questioned the empty tomb

## HOW WAS THE BIBLE PRESERVED?

Most skeptics don't understand how the Bible was preserved or transmitted (passed down). They usually assume people over the centuries played the "telephone game" by which a story was passed from person to person until the content was changed so much by the end that it is unreliable. But the telephone game has nothing to do with the Bible. Look at the illustration below and answer the questions to get a picture of how the Bible text was preserved.<sup>20</sup>

Suppose the original recipe for your grandmother's blackberry sauce was lost and all that remained were the four copies of it below (she didn't use email or text). Circle the differences between the copies (as shown).

The illustration shows four handwritten recipes for "Blackberry Sauce". Blue circles highlight differences between the copies, and blue lines connect the same words or phrases across the different versions to show how they can be compared and corrected.

- Top Left:**
  - 2 pt. fresh blackberries, halved
  - 1/4 cup sugar
  - 2 1/2 tsp. orange zest
  - 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
  - 1 pt. vanilla ice cream
  - 6 gingersnaps, crushed
  - 1) Stir together first 4 ingredients in a saucepan over med. high heat; cook, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until thoroughly heated.
  - Serve over ice cream; sprinkle with gingersnaps
- Top Right:**
  - Blackberry Sauce
  - 2 pt. fresh blackberries, halved
  - 1/4 cup sugar
  - 2 1/2 tsp. orange zest
  - 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
  - 1 pt. vanilla ice cream
  - 6 gingersnaps, crushed
  - Stir together first 4 ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Serve over vanilla ice cream; sprinkle with gingersnaps.
- Bottom Left:**
  - Blackberry Sauce
  - Serves 6
  - 2 pt. fresh blackberry, halved
  - 1/4 cup sugar
  - 2 1/2 tsp. orange zest
  - 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
  - 1 pt. vanilla ice cream
  - 6 gingersnaps crushed
  - 1) Stir together first 4 ingredients in a saucepan over med. heat; cook 5 min; stir constantly until heated.
  - Serve over ice cream w/ gingersnaps
- Bottom Right:**
  - Blackberry Sauce
  - 2 pt. fresh blackberries, halved
  - 1/4 cup sugar
  - 2 1/2 tsp. orange zest
  - 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
  - 1 pt. vanilla ice cream
  - 6 gingersnaps, crushed
  - 1) Stir together first 4 ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Serve over vanilla ice cream; sprinkle with gingersnaps

Connections shown by lines:

- Top Left "1/4 cup sugar" to Top Right "1/4 cup sugar"
- Top Left "2 1/2 tsp. orange zest" to Top Right "2 1/2 tsp. orange zest"
- Top Left "1/2 tsp. ground ginger" to Top Right "1/2 tsp. ground ginger"
- Top Left "1 pt. vanilla ice cream" to Top Right "1 pt. vanilla ice cream"
- Top Left "6 gingersnaps, crushed" to Top Right "6 gingersnaps, crushed"
- Top Left "stirring constantly" to Bottom Right "stirring constantly"
- Top Left "5 minutes" to Bottom Right "5 minutes"
- Top Left "thoroughly heated" to Bottom Right "thoroughly heated"
- Top Left "Serve over ice cream" to Bottom Right "Serve over vanilla ice cream"
- Top Left "sprinkle with gingersnaps" to Bottom Right "sprinkle with gingersnaps"

■ Even if some of the copies contain errors or are damaged, explain how we would be able to construct an accurate copy? Not all copies would have the same errors so we could put together an accurate copy from all the information that agrees.

■ How many copies (manuscripts and fragments) exist of the Old Testament?

6 | 54 | 750 | 1,200 | 8,300 | **14,000**

■ How many copies (manuscripts and fragments) exists of the New Testament?<sup>21</sup>

91 | 652 | 3,800 | 14,700 | **25,000** | 31,000



## START DIGGING

The following exercises will help dig up the flawed ideas of BIBLICAL SKEPTICISM.

### ASK A PROBING QUESTION

If a skeptic raises an objection about a specific Bible passage and he sincerely wants an explanation, go directly to the Bible. However, if his objection expresses a general distrust of the Bible, we should try to reset his *perception* of the Bible before answering specific objections to its content. So we need to ask the *Probing Question*:

**"If God really gave us a book, how would we know it came from him?"**

If the skeptic is confident that the Bible is merely a man-made book, then he should be able to explain the difference between what a man-made books looks like and what one from God looks like. However, it is likely that his understanding of the Bible is vague and that he has not thought about it in these terms before. So walk him through the following exercises:

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### ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY

If the skeptic does not have an answer for the Probing Question above, we can offer the following response and a few examples to support it:

**"I believe the Bible came from God for two ORDINARY reasons and for two EXTRAORDINARY reasons."**

#### ORDINARY

If the Bible is a divinely inspired book, at the very least it should prove that it is:

- 1) **Honest about people**, and
- 2) **Historically accurate**

■ How do the following passages fulfill #1?

(Gen. 12:10-13; 2Sam. 12:7-10; Jon. 1:1-3; Mat. 15:15-17, 16:5-11; 26:71-74)

the accounts record the moral failings of the Bible's heroes: lying, adultery, murder, rebellion, mental slowness, etc.

■ Why are these good examples for the Bible's historical accuracy? (Ex. 1:11; Ezra 1:1-2; Jer. 39:2; Luke 2:1-2; Acts 23:26, 25:13)

the accounts record well known people, places and dates that can be verified by secular history



## ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY (cont.)

### EXTRAORDINARY

Beyond being accurate about natural things, point out that the Bible uniquely includes these supernatural elements:

- 1) **Predicting specific future events (prophecy)**, and
- 2) **Seamless consistency** despite being written by forty authors over a fifteen-hundred-year span

■ **Prophecy:** Read Ezekiel 26:1-14. What details match the historical summary below?

— *Ezekiel wrote the prophecy against Tyre in 586 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Tyre from 585-572 B.C. Most of the inhabitants fled by ship to an island 1/2 mile off the coast. In 332 B.C. (almost 250 years after Ezekiel died) Alexander the Great's coalition army scraped up the ruins of mainland Tyre and built a causeway out to the island city and defeated it.*<sup>22</sup> —

Nebuchadnezzar will "ravage" the mainland; "many nations" will "scrape away the rubble;" "out in the sea" it will become a "bare rock," etc.

Without looking them up, do the following quotes appear in the Old Testament or New Testament? To whom do they refer? How do they validate bible prophecy?

— *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" • "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him" • "...a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet." • "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."* —

Old Testament (Psalm 22); they refer to David; they give a prophetic, detailed account of the crucifixion recorded in the Gospels

■ **Seamless Consistency:** How do the following passages show the Bible's consistency between the Old and New Testaments?

- Ps. 110:1 vs. Mat. 26:64, Acts 7:55-56 Jesus at the right hand of the Father
- Lev. 17:11 vs.. Heb. 9:22 blood atonement
- Ex. 12:5-6, 46; Isa. 53:7 vs. Luke 23:4; Mark 15:42-44; John 19:33 unblemished sacrifice with no broken bones killed at twilight during Passover
- Ex. 3:14 vs. John 8:58 God and Jesus self-identify as "I am"
- Dan. 12:2 vs. Mat. 25:46 end-times judgment: eternal life & eternal punishments
- Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4 vs. Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8 justification through faith
- Num. 16:47-48; Job 9:33 vs. 1Tim. 2:5 a mediator between God and man





## RED-FLAG WORDS

We have already discussed aspects of some of these terms, but they are the heart of some of the most common reasons people misunderstand and mistrust the Bible. Clarify the meanings of the BIBLICAL Red-Flag words in these statements:

### ***“LEGEND/ MYTH”***

*“The Bible is a collection of proverbs, stories, and **MYTHS** passed down over generations.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: any event in the past that can not be explained naturalistically

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Why is this statement flawed?: it takes generations for myth to overtake fact b/c witnesses can refute it; manuscripts over a thousand years apart show consistency in the accounts, not an accumulation of mythical details

### ***“LITERALLY”***

*“There is no way to reason with people who read the Bible **LITERALLY**.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: having a simplistic, wooden understanding of the Bible

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Why is this statement flawed?: it shows an ignorance about the fact that we should read everything “literally” - according to the context, structure, purpose and background in which it was written.

### ***“TRANSLATIONS (OF THE BIBLE)”***

*“We can’t trust the Bible because it has been corrupted by many years of **TRANSLATION**.”*

Skeptic’s meaning: the many conflicting texts we now have versus what was originally written down

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Why is this statement flawed?: it confuses “translation” with “transmission”

Translation into a different language is not an issue. The question is whether the Bible we have today is the same one that was written down originally.

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