

God's Existence, Part 1

By R. Keith Loftin

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Romans 2:14-15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What does it mean to do something "instinctively"? Which creatures have moral instincts? What exactly is one's "conscience"? Which creatures have consciences?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Genesis 1:26-27 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What's different about the creation of humans compared with the creation of all other creatures? How should the image of God in humans change the way we treat other humans?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Genesis 1:26-27 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to name several laws that indicate that human life is unique and different from all other animal life.

Scripture to Memorize

"They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." Romans 2:15

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will understand how objective moral values point to God's existence.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Think about a conversation you've heard or perhaps participated in where someone claimed that what's right and what's wrong – morality – is really nothing but personal or cultural preference. Clearly, different people and different cultures have different preferences about certain matters, but is preference an adequate source for morality? Is morality possible if God does not exist?

Read Romans 2:14-15 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 14–15. by nature . . . Law . . . conscience. In these verses Paul tells us that all people, regardless of whether they know the Mosaic Law, know the difference between what is right and what is wrong. People know this, he writes, instinctively. Why? This moral awareness in people is not some accident but rather has been “written on their hearts.” This awareness is an intentional element of our design. When we think about the nature of the morality written on our hearts, we see that it requires God's existence.

Think about moral values such as “good” and “bad,” “justice” and “hate.” These are *objective* in nature. To say there are *objective* moral values is to say some things are morally right, while others are morally wrong – *regardless of anyone's opinion*. Consider the Holocaust: saying that morals are objective is saying that the anti-Semitism carried out by the Nazis was morally evil, despite the fact that the Nazis themselves believed it to be morally good.

By contrast, the U.S. Declaration of Independence asserts as “self-evident” truth “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”

Compare these two pictures of morality: if moral values are subjective – that is, if they are decided upon by individuals or societies – then the morals of a society *cannot* be reformed. History, however, recognizes and celebrates great moral reformers such as Jesus, Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. These people bravely challenged the behavior and ethical standards of society. They pushed for the abolition of slavery, for example, or women's right to vote.

Such reformers, though, *belong to* the society against whose moral code they stand. If moral values are defined by society and moral reformers stand against society's moral code, then the reformer is by definition behaving *immorally*, since he or she is violating their society's moral code by standing at odds with it! Moral subjectivists, therefore, cannot *praise* moral reformers because, given subjectivism, such behavior is not praiseworthy; it is immoral. It is contradictory to think that moral reformers are immoral! Therefore, morals must be objective in nature.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on instincts and conscience.

Discussion Question

Does the fact that people disagree about certain “gray area” issues mean morality cannot be objective?

Foundation of Morality

But what can be the foundation or basis for these objective moral values? According to theism, the basis for objective moral values is God, who is personal and wholly good. Theism is the belief in one God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

Moral values are reflections of God's perfect character. Humans possess dignity and worth *because* we are created in the image of this God. According to theism, moral values are not subjective or arbitrary; they are *objective* because they are grounded in the perfect and eternal character of God.

Therefore, if God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist. As the atheist Richard Dawkins accurately explains, if there is no God, "then there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, *no evil and no good*, nothing but blind pitiless indifference" (Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*, 1995, 132-33).

Read Genesis 1:26-27 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verses 26–27. Let us . . . Our image . . . created them. Here we read that humans, unlike every other creature, are created in the image of the Creator God. Humans resemble God in a way that *nothing else* in the universe does. This statement has two implications. First, humans possess intrinsic value and dignity. Second, humans instinctively possess awareness of objective morality. By comparison, Darwinian evolution cannot explain either intrinsic worth or objective moral values.

Charles Darwin believed our moral beliefs are "hard wired" into us by evolution to help us survive, but this scenario cannot give us objective moral values because we might just as easily have evolved a different set of moral beliefs. In other words, with Darwinian evolution, whether murder is morally right or wrong *depends on* how humans happen to evolve. This is moral subjectivism; but, as we have seen, moral values are objective. Likewise, if Darwinian evolution is true, nothing at all is special about human beings. We might be biased toward our species, but that doesn't *make* humans objectively special any more than a preference for ice cream makes it the objectively best dessert.

If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist; but objective moral values *do* exist. Therefore, God exists. In other words, we have powerful evidence from the nature of morality for the existence of God. Moral values are objective because they are reflections of God's own nature. Because we are created in the image of this personal God, all humans possess intrinsic value and moral awareness.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the uniqueness of humans among all creatures and how this should impact our treatment of others.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on several laws that indicate that human life is unique and different from all other animal life.

On Your Own

Think about how you might appeal to the nature of morality to discuss God's existence with a friend who does not believe in a God. In the space below, write some of the most important things you would say.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

One of the most striking features of the world that indicates God's existence is morality itself. When we think about the nature of moral values, we recognize that they are objective in nature. According to theism, moral values are not subjective or arbitrary; they are *objective* because they are grounded in the perfect and eternal character of God.

Such moral values simply cannot be explained apart from God. Moral values are reflections of God's perfect character. Christians and atheists alike can know instinctively the difference between right and wrong because we have all been created in the image of God.

Romans 2:14-15 tells us that all people know the difference between what is right and what is wrong "instinctively" because it has been "written on their hearts."

In Genesis 1:26-27 we learn that humans are created in the image of the Creator God. Therefore, humans possess intrinsic value and dignity, as well as an instinctive awareness of objective morality.

To say there are *objective* moral values is to say some things are morally right while others are morally wrong, *regardless of anyone's opinion*.

If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist. But objective moral values *do* exist. Therefore, God exists.

Follow-up Question

In what way is morality evidence for God's existence?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.