



TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

January 2022

TELL ME ABOUT EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Jehovah God is described in these words: “*He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion*” (Jeremiah 10:12). When He created the universe, God’s power, His wisdom, and His will/discretion were on display.

Skeptics doubt that God exists. *Agnostics* affirm that no one can know for certain if God exists or not. A third group of unbelievers, *atheists*, declare that there is no God. As we encounter such unbelief, and as we endeavor to instill within our kids, grandkids, and all Christians the unwavering conviction that God exists, what evidence can we cite which leads to the irrefutable conclusion that God, indeed, does exist?

When you and I see design in something, we know that there must have been an intelligent designer who produced it. We see design in things around us all the time, and we recognize that such design came about by plan, not by accident. When we observe a skyscraper’s walls, floors, doors, windows, lights, and other material matters, what do we conclude? All of those things demonstrate design. And, if there is design, there must have been a thinking designer. The same is true of an automobile, a mobile phone, or a computer . . . they all have evidence of design in them.

How is the matter of design connected with our desire to prove that there is a God? There is widespread design in our universe, and such design points to a Designer, whom the Bible calls “*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth. . .*” (Acts 17:24).

Think about three kinds of living beings: fish, birds, and elephants. Fish are programmed to live in water . . . the other two are not. Birds are programmed to fly with wings . . . the other two are not. An elephant drinks with his trunk, but the others do not. Such action is not by accident, nor is it by personal choice. It is by design, which calls for a designer.

The Psalmist declared, “. . . *I am fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:14). Yes, the human body is amazing, and the design within it is abundantly clear. What kind of design? An airliner contains millions of non-flying parts. If you put the parts together, the plane will fly. Would we conclude

that a gazillion plane parts functioning together is by design or accident? The only reasonable conclusion is that it is by design. Now, what about the human body? It contains 11 major organ systems [<https://study.com>], 78 organs [www.livescience.com], 206 bones in an adult (“Bones store about 99 percent of the calcium in your body and are composed of about 25 percent water”) [www.healthline.com], and 30 trillion cells [www.healthline.com]. How do our bodies know that they need organs, systems, bones, and cells? And, how do the bones know that they are supposed to store so much calcium? Just a lucky chance? An incredible accident? No, it is by design!

Consider the human heart and circulatory system. We cannot function without them, but how does our body even know that it needs them? The heart pumps blood, arteries carry blood away from the heart, and veins bring it back to the heart. Is such an arrangement just an accident? Surely not. Our heart beats around 100,000 times per day [www.webmd.com], pumping about 2,000 gallons (7,570 litres) of blood every day [www.healthline.com]. Again, how does our heart know to do that? It cannot be by accident, not did it come about by trial and error . . . It is by design!

DNA is the genetic “code” that determines the characteristics of a living thing. Your DNA is what makes you, you. “DNA makes up genes, and humans share 99.9% of those genes in common. It’s that .1% that makes each of us unique” [<https://dnacentre.co.uk>]. Who programmed the marvelous DNA/genetic code within each of us? There is no way that it was by accident, choice, or trial and error . . . It is by design!

The human reproductive system proves the existence of a supreme Being. It takes male plus female interaction to produce another human. How did humans know they need reproductive organs? And, how did humans know they needed to be divided into two genders, males and females? Humans did not decide to have such organs . . . they were supplied by the Creator.

Design proves the existence of a designer. Design in the human body gives ample evidence that there must be an intelligent Maker behind it. He does wondrous works, and He alone is God (Psalm 86:10).

-- Roger D. Campbell

HAVING STRONG FAMILIES: WE MUST BUILD THEM “BY THE BOOK”

I once read a story about a little girl who was crying brokenheartedly in the car after leaving worship one Sunday. Her mother repeatedly asked her what was wrong, and, finally, the girl answered, “The preacher said he wanted all children to be brought up in Christian homes, but I want to stay with you!”

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all homes would be Christian homes? Christian homes have surrendered to the will and design of God. How does God's word describe and display the proper building of the home?

God's pattern for the beginning and building of a home is focused on marriage. In this study we will be focusing on what the Bible teaches us regarding (1) who are the candidates for marriage and (2) what constitutes a marriage.

Who Are Candidates for Marriage

From God's perspective, marriage is a blessing to all who are authorized to marry. The question is often posed, “Can we be married?” As we have often taught our children, “can” and “may” change a question completely. “Can” deals with ability, while “may” is a matter of permission or authorization. Very often a society or civil law grants ability in situations where God's law does not grant permission or authority. Consider Herod's marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; John the Baptizer told him, “*It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife*” (Mark 6:17,18).

God has specified who is authorized or permitted to marry. First, one who has never been married before. In Genesis 2 we read of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. In stating their relationship bond of marriage, God said, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*” (verse 24). If either of them had been married before, they would not be able to join in this bond together, having been bound as one flesh with someone else. We further read in Hebrews 13:4, “*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*” If one is married and departs to be joined with another, adultery is being committed and would never be authorized by God. So, one who has never been married is authorized, by God, to marry someone else who is eligible for marriage.

Second, one is authorized to marry when their spouse has died. In Romans 7, Paul uses the specific law of God regarding marriage to illustrate the nature of the rule of law in general. In verses 2-3 we read, “*For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her*

husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.” In 1 Corinthians 7:39 we see the same principle: “*A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.*” So, one whose rightful spouse has died is authorized, by God, to marry someone else who is eligible for marriage.

Third, one is Biblically authorized to marry who has put their rightful spouse away for the cause of fornication. When you read Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:1-12, and Luke 16:18, you should understand that God's intention is for marriage to be permanent. Two people, male and female, who are rightfully married, are never to be separated from that bond except by physical death. They are never to go beyond their marriage and involve anyone else in a physical relationship. To do so is sin, plain and simple. By inspiration, Matthew states the only exception to the rule of lifelong marriage – putting a spouse away for the cause of fornication (Matthew 19:9). So, one who has put their spouse away for the cause of fornication is authorized, by God, to marry someone else who is eligible for marriage.

What Constitutes a Marriage

According to Genesis 2:24, in marriage there must be a “leaving” of father and mother, and a “cleaving” (KJV) to one another as husband and wife. This means that individuals considering marriage should be old enough to take care of themselves, to take on adult responsibilities.

A husband and wife must learn to rely on each other first, to meet one another's needs. Consider the message of Ephesians 5:22-33, as we see the roles of the husband and wife interwoven as each is seeking to obey God in service to one another.

In teaching regarding marriage, I always stress that there is a three-fold commitment: first, to God; second, to God's law of marriage; and third, to one another. In marriage there will be good times and hard times. When we face the difficult times, it can be easy to turn against one another. A proper commitment to God and His law of marriage will keep us from doing something that will cause us to be in sin and, potentially, harm many souls in the process.

Let us determine to follow God's word, to build our homes “by the book” so that we are blessed and God is pleased!

-- Dave Leonard

We Need to Imitate Jesus' Compassion

In every aspect of His life, the Son of God was perfect. As much as possible, we need to follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21) and have the heart/mind that He did (Philippians 2:5).

As we study the marvelous message of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we quickly see that Jesus showed compassion as He dealt with people. Our Lord not only was aware of the hardships and troubles that people faced: He *cared* about them and had a *desire* to *help* them. That is what compassion is. Jesus did more than sympathize with others who faced hard times . . . He demonstrated His compassion by taking action.

In what situations did the Christ show compassion? He had compassion on those who lacked food, as we read, *"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with me three days and have nothing to eat"* (Mark 8:2). He then proceeded to feed about four thousand men.

Jesus showed compassion on those who were grieving. After the only son of a widow in the city of Nain died, Jesus had compassion on her (Luke 7:11-13). We need to emulate such tenderhearted mercy.

Our Lord also demonstrated compassion on those who needed a spiritual shepherd. It is written, *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"* (Matthew 9:36). When Jesus saw humans, He saw more than physical bodies . . . He saw people's wants and needs.

Before Jesus fed about five thousand men, He showed compassion in at least two ways. At that time, according to Matthew 14:14, *"And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude, and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick."* He saw, He had compassion, and He took action. At that same time, what else transpired? *"And Jesus . . . saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things"* (Mark 6:34). What do we see? Jesus' compassion caused Him to care about people's *physical* and *spiritual* needs.

Finally, the Christ showed compassion/pity on those who messed up. For instance, after Peter denied Him three times, Jesus used the former fisherman to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:31,32) and serve the Lord's sheep (John 21:15-17).

God wants each Christian to show compassion (1 Peter 3:8). We know where to find the greatest example of tenderheartedness — we see it in the life of Jesus. May we learn to be compassionate like Him!

-- Roger D. Campbell

Galatians 1:6-9 – The Danger of Perverting the Gospel

Galatians is a powerful letter emphasizing Christians' freedom in Christ as vastly superior to the bondage of the Law of Moses (or any other law). Paul also sets out in Galatians to defend his apostleship since, if his apostolic authority could be questioned, so could the message he preached. At the outset, he says he is an apostle, *"not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father"* (Galatians 1:1). Paul's agitation and frustration is evident throughout because some were trying to pervert the gospel message of Jesus.

In Galatians 1:6-9, Paul warns of the danger of perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is shocked to see them turning away from Christ's gospel to a perverted message. Paul says the perverted message is not of the same kind or class as the true gospel message. Paul further tells them (and us) that, even were an angel from heaven to give a message that differs from or alters the gospel message, that angel is not only to be disbelieved, but he is accursed. And, to be sure the reader "gets it," the Spirit had Paul say it one more time: *"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:9). Is it safe to say God is serious about not tampering with His message?

Most religious-minded folks would say, "Amen" to this article so far. Few easily see themselves as "gospel-perverters"; doing so requires serious, honest self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5). But, consider...

- When the Bible says salvation is **not** solely by faith (mere mental assent, as in James 2:24), but an individual/group teaches salvation by faith alone, how is that not perverting the gospel message?
- When the Bible says women are **not** to teach or have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:11-14), but women then teach, preach, etc. in mixed assemblies, how is that not perverting the gospel?

More examples could be given, but the point is made. Let us each examine ourselves and be certain we are not perverting the gospel, and let us study to be certain we are not following a perverted gospel for, as Jesus Himself says, *"If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch"* (Matthew 15:14). We surely do not want to find ourselves in the ditch, whether as one who taught a perverted gospel or one who followed such. God has revealed the gospel of Jesus Christ in His word. He is authoritative, and He is serious. Our sole responsibility is to obey the gospel of Christ.

-- Chad Dollahite

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH OF SYRIA

Because first-century congregations were composed of humans, they were not flawless. Yet, it can be extremely helpful to us to investigate the early local churches and learn from their actions, attitudes, and circumstances. In this article, our focus will be on the church in Antioch of Syria.

Following the death of Stephen (Acts 7), severe persecution caused the disciples who were living in Jerusalem to scatter to other places. One of the blessings that resulted from that scattering was the spread of the gospel to regions where it had not been proclaimed previously. That is how the church in Antioch was established: dispersed disciples went there to preach the word *“and a great number believed and turned to the Lord”* (Acts 11:21). Hardship in Jerusalem brought redemption to Antioch.

The church in Antioch was blessed to have another congregation assist it. When the brethren in Jerusalem heard that the gospel had gone to Antioch, they sent Barnabas to work with the new disciples there (Acts 11:22). The Jerusalem church did not try to rule over the Antioch congregation, but they voluntarily helped it. Local churches of our generation are blessed when other congregations, whether they are near or far away, come to their aid by providing teachers, other manpower, financial assistance, Bible materials, moral support, or training in specific areas.

The worker/helper whom the Jerusalem church sent to Antioch was Barnabas, who proceeded to encourage the brethren to continue with the Lord (Acts 11:23). Barnabas' initial work with the Antioch saints had this wonderful result: *“And a great many people were added to the Lord”* (Acts 11:24). No one can force others to work harmoniously and productively. In some cases, the working relationship between a newcomer/outsider and the locals does not go smoothly. In the case of Antioch and Barnabas, they seemed to be “a good fit,” acting as a united team. We should not take that blessing for granted.

Phase one of the work in Antioch was the initial propagation of the gospel. The next phase was when Barnabas joined the work force there. The third stage came when Barnabas went to seek Saul, who returned to Antioch with Barnabas. What good thing came out of that partnership? *“So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people”* (Acts 11:26). How blessed the church in Antioch was to have those two faithful men of God working with them at the same time! May we always appreciate and be grateful for those who put forth the effort to teach, edify, and serve us.

Consider this historical fact: *“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”* (Acts 11:26). That was a divine calling, meaning the Lord is the one who labeled them as “Christians.” The Antioch church apparently was comprised of both Gentiles and Jews. “Christian” means “a follower of Christ” [Thayer, word no. 5546 via e-Sword]. If we call ourselves “a Christian,” we need to live up to the lofty expectations that come with such a name. The Christ and His Cause must be the greatest love of our life!

The Antioch church showed generosity. When the prophet Agabus foretold that a famine was coming, the brethren in Antioch went into action. What did they do? *“Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (Acts 11:29,30). The Antioch church (1) became aware of a need, (2) they decided to render assistance, and then (3) they actually did so. Those who received their aid were blessed, but so were the willing givers!

In addition to Barnabas and Saul, there were other prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). What a blessing to have multiple brethren who were capable of communicating God's word. The Bible nowhere indicates how many workers a local church is allowed to have (Antioch had at least six, Acts 13:1). Rather than complain about churches that have multiple full-time workers while we have only one or perhaps none at all, let us all be committed to doing what we can with our abilities and not fret over how many workers a different congregation has.

For Paul's three preaching trips that are recorded in the book of Acts, in each case he departed from Antioch. It is clear that the church there endorsed Paul's work in other places, as they did the labors of Barnabas. When the Holy Spirit called for Barnabas and Saul to leave Antioch to go work elsewhere, what did the brethren in Antioch do? They fasted, prayed, laid hands on those two men (as a sign of endorsing/supporting them), and sent them away (Acts 13:4).

Here is a final thought. The Antioch church continued to carry on God's work, even after it lost two great workers, Barnabas and Saul. Think about it.

-- Roger D. Campbell

[Unless stated otherwise, all quotes in all articles of TRUTH come from the New King James Version; ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]

TRUTH is published monthly by the Green's Lake Road church of Christ in order to help educate, edify, encourage, and equip the saints of God