

# DOES GOD EXIST?

*A nonprofit effort  
to convince mankind  
that God is real and  
the Bible is His Word.*

**First Quarter 2021  
Volume 48 Number 1**



**LESSONS FROM  
THE PANDEMIC**

## Does God Exist? Lectureship Update

No Lectures are scheduled, but see page 26 for an opportunity to have a lecture-like experience with our DVDs and John Clayton.

We hope that all our friends and readers of this *Does God Exist?* journal are staying healthy during this sheltering-in-place pandemic. We all need to rely on God to watch over us and protect us from this virus as well as from other maladies that we may face.

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Visit the Clayton Museum of Ancient History at York College in York, Nebraska. <https://www.clayton-museumofancienthistory.org/>.

The *Does God Exist?* program offers apologetic materials in several languages for all ages. We are designed to serve and help others. Our materials are available on a loan basis or at our cost. If you are not aware of our DVDs, CDs, courses, books, teaching materials, materials for the blind, and online question/answer services, contact us for a catalog and information sheets or visit [www.doesgodexist.org](http://www.doesgodexist.org).

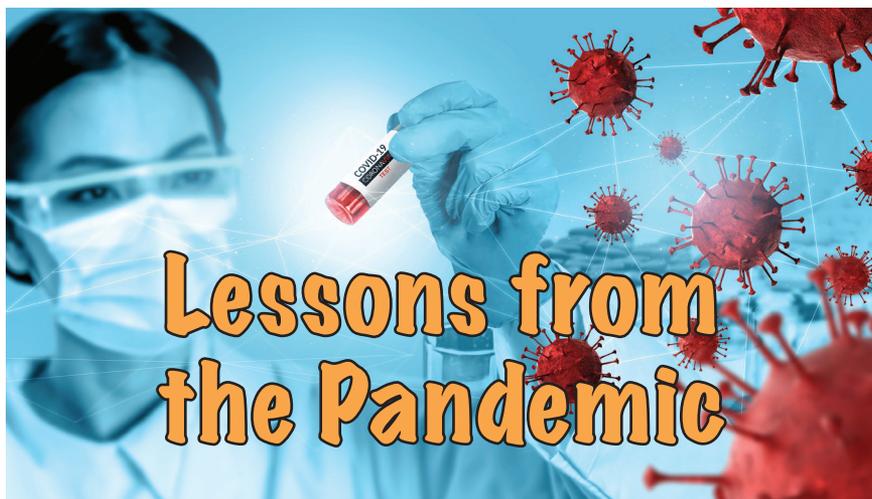
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# Lessons from the Pandemic

Thanks to vaccines, we now have hope that medical science will bring COVID-19 under control in 2021. This pandemic has been a unique experience, although some of us remember other plagues and disease epidemics in our lifetimes. As a child I lost classmates and friends to polio. I remember how people reacted to polio and to the vaccine that finally stopped that horrible disease. Iron lungs and post-polio syndrome went on for many years after the threat of contracting the disease had ended.

In the days of Jesus, similar problems existed. Leprosy was a major health threat, and its control came about by biblically-prescribed quarantine practices. The COVID-19 pandemic was a new experience for most of us, and the way people reacted was new for all of us. There are some powerful lessons to learn as we look back at the pandemic reactions of 2020.

## **LESSON 1. People, including Christians, do not trust science.**

From the beginning of the pandemic, scientists warned the public about what the virus could do and what we needed to do to control it. They repeatedly emphasized that we must wear a mask, avoid large gatherings (especially indoors), and socially distance to slow the virus's spread. Now that vaccines are available, medical people tell us that we should take the vaccine to stop the disease.



It is important to note that God has not guaranteed us personal political freedom. Paul, Peter, Timothy, and John the Baptist spent time in prison and lived in obedience to Roman law (see Romans 13.) We have freedom in Christ, but it is spiritual freedom, not civic physical freedom.

This ministry is dedicated to the proposition that science and faith are friends. Some in the religious community have opposed this ministry, believing that science is an enemy of faith. The hypocrisy



of this view is apparent. We go to the doctor when we are sick. We have huge hospitals that apply the latest medical science to our bodies. We allow doctors to cut our bodies open to correct physical ailments, and we take chemicals into our bodies to restore health or keep us healthy. In all of

those areas, we trust medical science and those who practice it. But when medical science tells us we need to do certain things to avoid a pandemic, we become skeptics. We do not trust and turn our backs on medical science, and that is inconsistent.

Medical science has pushed our life expectancy to nearly twice what it was in the days of Jesus. We can deny what science tells us or what God tells us, but that does not make it untrue. The word “science” means knowledge. Jesus and Paul repeatedly appealed to the people of their day to use the knowledge they had to find their way to obedience to God. If we think there is a conflict between science and what we read in God’s word, we need to look more carefully. Either we have bad science or bad theology or both. The lesson of history has been that there has been a lot of both. God is the source of all knowledge, and God is the source of the Bible. They cannot possibly conflict since they have the same author.

## **LESSON 2. Violating God’s instructions always produces pain, and for many, God is a scapegoat.**

As you read the Old Testament and the instructions God gave Israel, one thing stands out. Modern medical science shows us that many of those instructions are practices that avoided pandemics and disease. We see the wisdom of not drinking blood and the restrictions on certain foods, especially animals. The use of quarantine and the structure of the family also make good sense scientifically. Science

tells us that there are animal origins for the pandemics humans have endured. Alternative lifestyles have produced STDs of all kinds, and drugs have had a massive effect on mental health.

At the same time, the pandemic has given skeptics a tool to attack God. Every time there is a human decision that brings pain and suffering to many people, skeptics blame God. We need to remind ourselves that the COVID-19 virus did not come from God, but from human actions. The current pandemic has shown that greed, selfishness, and desire for power have brought suffering through ignoring science. We have seen the heart-wrenching pictures of those who have lost a parent, child, sibling, or mate to the virus. Much of this has come from people putting their own desires above the advice of medical science. It has not come from God or his biblical instructions.



### **LESSON 3. Given the choice of pleasure with a high risk of death or taking care of our bodies, many people will choose pleasure.**

In November 2020, America entered the holiday season of Thanksgiving and Christmas. The news channels showed medical scientists and workers begging people not to hold events where many people would be close together. However, concerts and social gatherings, public eating establishments, and airline seats were filling even though the COVID-19 virus was at pandemic levels. Hospitals became at or beyond capacity, and some officials called out the National Guard to take care of the bodies of people who had died. Our culture has become so pleasure-oriented and so far from Christ's instructions to love and care for each other that a large part of our population chose to put their desires first.

Why does it take the deaths of massive numbers of people to get us to listen to God and follow his instructions about how we should live? This planet's history is full of human excesses and the ultimate disasters that come from making pleasure one's god (see Romans 1:21 – 32).



## LESSON 4. Isolation displays family strengths and weaknesses.

It has been interesting to notice how different people in different family relationships react to being quarantined. Some people have enjoyed a wonderful experience of being with family. Others have been angry and frustrated at being confined with people they do not



enjoy. Many have been lonely because they live alone, and family members cannot come to see them. Some essential workers had nobody to stay with their kids so they could work. Many have been unable to work because their workplace was closed, and they

struggled to pay their bills and feed their families.

We have used Zoom to conduct church worship services and distant family interaction for most of the pandemic. We have found both to be a deeply satisfying way to maintain church fam-

ily and blood family interactions. The technology of our day allows us to participate in church meetings even in the safety and privacy of our own homes. Those religious people who feel that observing quarantine rules prohibits Christian worship do not understand that the church is not a building. Worship can happen at any place at any time. Praying together, being informed about others' wellbeing, organizing help to those in need, and encouraging each other are incredible ways to strengthen our families and church relationships.



Ephesians 5 and 6 give family instructions that we should follow at all times, but they become essential in the pandemic. We do not need big auditoriums with large numbers of seats to worship God.

Boredom and not having things to do should not happen in Christian families. Our family activities should strengthen and unite us. The pandemic gave us a chance to see how our families function and where we need to improve.

## **LESSON 5. Spiritual strength enables both physical and emotional survival.**

Our son Tim who has multiple handicaps of blindness, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and mental challenges, lived in a group home. He contracted the COVID-19 virus from a worker in the home. The virus's attack was brutal, and Tim spent a week in the hospital, not expected to survive. As I tried to discuss with him what was happening, his attention turned to what lay ahead. He spoke



of being able to see and seeing his mother, who passed away in 2008. He talked about being with Jesus and walking and doing the things that his progressive illnesses have taken from him. There was no lamenting the fact that he was about to die. His concern was enjoying the time he had left, and food

was one of those enjoyments. He talked with nurses and doctors about their beliefs and about being a Christian.

One of his doctors marveled at Tim's positive spirit. When Tim reached the point where caregivers had to feed him, they found him positive and supportive of the help they gave him. As I write this, Tim is back in the group home but still on oxygen, and he still has to be fed. If he passes on from this life, he knows that he has endured the worst of what Satan can do to him, and there is nothing but good things in his future.

The question that every one of us has to answer is whether we are ready to leave this Earth? Are we secure as we see death in our future? We will all survive the pandemic, but not all of us will survive it physically. My aging body will probably die if I get the virus, but my spirit lives on. When I was an atheist, a disease like polio was the ultimate tragedy. That is no longer true. I now know there is something better ahead. If I survive physically, it will be to help others have the security of becoming Christians with the promise of a better future.

—John N. Clayton



# God's Will vs. Determinism

“How can God let this happen?” That is a comment we often hear as people are afflicted with pain of all kinds from the pandemic. This is an ancient question going back to the book of Job in the Bible. It has become a faith problem because some theologians have taken a determinist view of God. J. Grant Howard has been a frequent writer supporting this view. He wrote:

God has a predetermined plan for every life. It is that which will happen. It is inevitable, unconditional, immutable, irresistible, comprehensive, and purposeful. It is also, for the most part, unpredictable. It includes everything—even sin and suffering. It involves everything—even human responsibility and human decisions. God does it all on his own. He does not react to situations; He creates them. Everything that happens, happens within the predetermined will of God ... your career, marriage partner, home location, grades in school, friends, sicknesses, accidents, honors, travels, income, retirement, etc., are all part of God's determined will, but are not revealed to you ahead of time.

(J. Grant Howard, *Knowing God's Will and Doing It*, page 19)

The determinist view is wrong. It turns humans into robots and makes us incapable of love, which can only exist if we have a choice to love. It violates the whole purpose of human existence, involving the battle between good and evil. The determinist view gives an excellent argument to those who say that all of the evil in the world disproves the existence of a loving and kind God. The fact that many Christians hold to a determinist view is partly responsible for much of the growth of atheism today.

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The Bible presents three different ways in which God's will exists.

1. God's will according to God's desire and God's decision.
2. God's will according to God's desire and human decisions.
3. God's will according to human decisions and God's permission.

## **GOD'S DESIRE AND GOD'S DECISION**

(Ephesians 1:1–11; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6)



Some things like the end of the world and judgment will happen. They are set in stone, and God will make them happen. Those things are relatively few and far between, and humans as a group will have no choice in the matter. But God has always given individuals the right to serve or reject him.

## **GOD'S DESIRE AND HUMAN DECISIONS**

(Genesis 2:24 and Mark 10:5–9; Romans 14:1–3, 5–7; Matthew 23:37)

God instituted marriage as one man and one woman. That was God's desire, but humans decided to violate God's desire. According to Jesus, it was because of the hardness of their hearts (Mark 10:5), and polygamy resulted. Polygamy does not work, and it violates women, but it was not God's desire.

God gave us a day to participate in corporate worship, but people have added other special days like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and others that God did not command but allowed (see Romans 14:5–7). In Matthew 23:37, we see Jesus crying out at the violence and sin of Jerusalem and telling them he wanted to save them, but they were not willing.

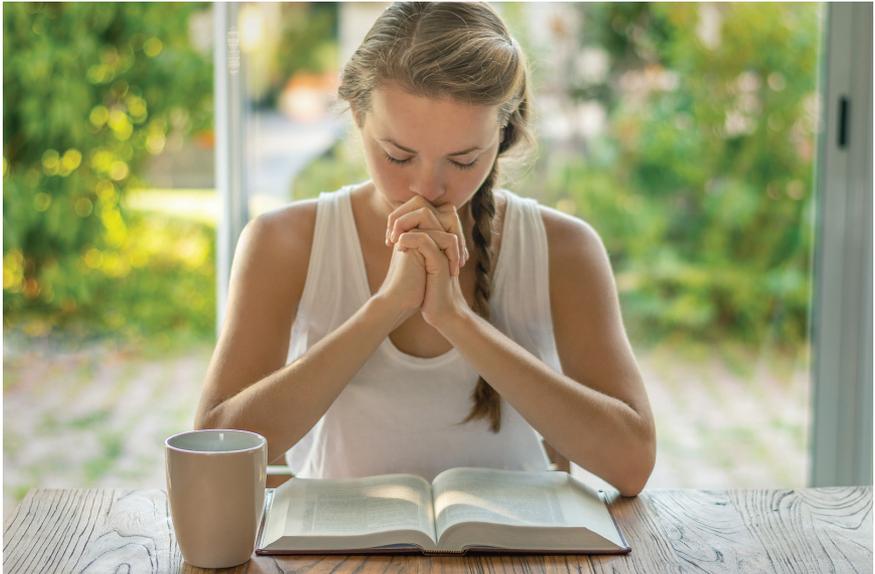


## HUMAN DECISIONS AND GOD'S PERMISSION

The Bible gives many examples of this, both good and bad, along with the consequences. Israel's desire to have a king is the classic example. Anna decided to be a temple widow until she was 84 years old after seven years of marriage rather than doing the customary Jewish ritual of bearing a child by her husband's brother (Luke 2:36–38). Lydia decided to open her house to the church in Thyatira (Acts 16:40). Sometimes God turns the bad choices of humans into a blessing, as we see in Genesis 45:4–10 with Joseph and his brothers.

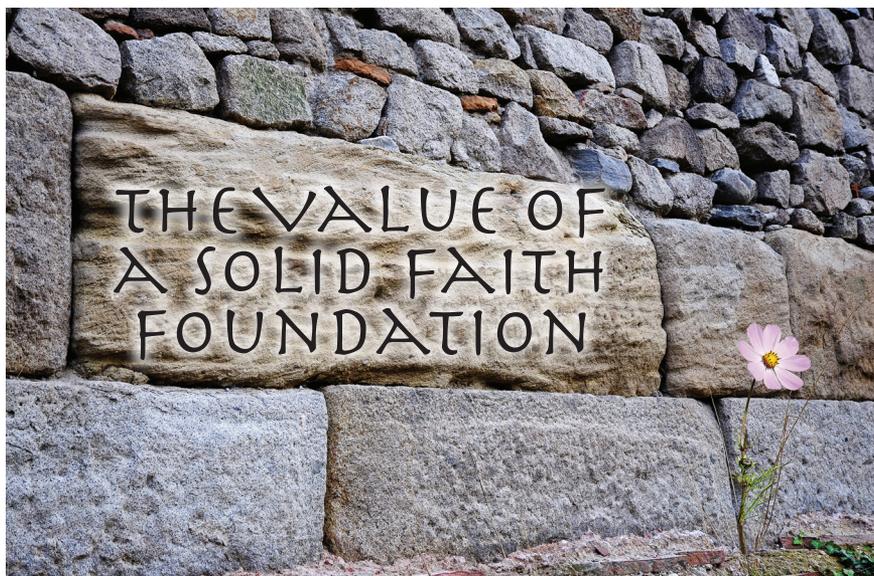
Determinists oversimplify how God acts in the affairs of humans. Every evil thing that happens takes place because of human decisions. God gives us the best way to live and warns us of the consequences of our choices if we oppose his instructions. Acts 14:16 (NASB1995) tells us that, "In generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways." That happens still today, but the consequences of going our own way have brought pain and suffering to the world.

—JNC



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In the distant past, people thought of gods as physical beings that looked like humans. Roman and Greek gods were humans with superpowers of one kind or another. Some people today still view God as a human with human emotions and desires. Experiences in life can weaken or destroy that kind of faith. When someone rejects faith in God because of a tragedy in life, the root cause of that rejection is a flawed concept of what God is.

Faith or lack of faith in God can determine the foundation of our lives. The question that we must ask is, “What is the foundation (faith) on which I base my life?” For my father, who was an atheist, the foundation of his life was education. His father was a minister, and that faith did not appeal to him as a way to build his life. Instead, he pursued the highest level of education possible, achieving a Ph.D. in philosophy at Columbia University under one of the leading educators in his field. Then he became a full professor at Indiana University (Bloomington) and was recognized as one of the top experts in his field.

After a long career with numerous awards and recognitions, my father retired. Did all of these achievements and recognitions provide a foundation for him? A regular activity for my father was to engage in a cocktail hour. He dealt with the stress and frustration of his work by drinking. My father was not socially active. He went to social affairs only because he had to, and alcohol was the foundation, the lubricant which enabled him to function socially.



Shortly after his retirement, he developed leukemia. Going through the brutal treatments available at that time was tragic and agonizing to watch. The end of his life was a constant battle to survive, and the treatments eventually killed him. Death was the ultimate tragedy because he died without hope of anything better.

The other problem with my father's faith was what his foundation did to my mother and my two brothers. My mother was forced to become the social director of the family. Social events were her life, and achieving recognition from her peers was her foundation. After my father died, she became the leader of the retirement center where she lived. She commanded the respect of everyone there, including the management and staff. This became her foundation, and her faith was that it would continue. When she suffered a stroke and was moved to the care center, she was not even allowed to eat with her peers, much less play a role in the retirement center's social events. She was so mortified and miserable in her new situation that I had to move her 200 miles from the retirement center to a facility near me. She was miserable there as well.

My parents had a dependence on alcohol as a foundation for life



and a faith that it would make everything else function normally. This rubbed off on the rest of the family. Like many people in today's world, the adverse effects destroyed not only my father's foundation but that of my mother and brothers as well. Faith or lack of faith in God

will determine the course of your life.

One facet of faith is that we frequently share it within families. When a family member rejects the faith of the others, that creates conflict. My parents strongly emphasized education as the foundation on which to build one's life. They viewed religion as irrational nonsense that enslaved and restricted humans. At every opportunity, my parents ridiculed religious faith. Hypocrisy, racism, violence, war, and waste provided a constant barrage of good reasons for them to reject faith in God. By the time I was eight years old, I regurgitated my parent's faith and took a lead role in atheism. That is how faith works in our lives.

In junior high, I had a science teacher named Wayne Gross, who made it clear that he believed that there was academic evidence that God exists, and the Bible is true. In high school, I had a great interest



and some aptitude in science. In addition to that, I became infatuated with an attractive young lady who was one of the top students in my high school class.

I did not have any moral values because my parents taught me that educated people realize

that life is “survival of the fittest.” The moral guidance I received was, “Make sure you come out number one.” I found that this attractive young lady was morally uncompromising, and she based her morality on the Bible. To get her to compromise her morality, I wanted to show her that faith in God and the Bible was educationally absurd.

I set out to prove to this girl, and to Mr. Gross, that educated people who read the Bible would not believe anything in it. Mr. Gross encouraged me to start with Genesis 1. I had stolen a Bible from a motel (there were no Bibles in my parent’s library), and I started reading it and researching the words in the original manuscripts to prove it wrong.

As I read the Bible and understood its message, looking at the scientific evidence, I started rejecting everything my parents, my peers, and the religious experts of the day told me. In doing that, I began to understand that everything they had said about God and the



Bible was wrong. Education was leading me to a new faith, and my parents did not handle my efforts well. They denigrated the faith of Mr. Gross, my girlfriend, and myself.

How faith works in our lives determines the direction we take. Several years later, I was faced with what to do with a child who was born blind, mentally challenged, and with both cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy. This polarized my faith and my parent’s faith. My father used a parallel example of buying a car and finding

it was defective. “What do you do?” he asked. “You take it back and demand a refund.” I did not do that, and I am glad. Timothy’s faith has been a blessing to many people.

How we handle evidence and what we do with it leads us to faith and becomes the foundation that impacts our lives. Faith has a role in science, religion, and the practical day-to-day living of our lives. I have shared my journey of how I left my family’s atheistic faith and grew a faith in God from the scientific evidence and the Bible. I hope that you will examine the evidence for God and allow your faith to grow. Faith, whether Christian or atheist, is the foundation on which you build your life.

As you consider what you will place your faith in, consider the following things. You have two choices about the cosmos. Either it



has always existed, or it had a beginning. As an atheist, I believed that matter/energy was eternal. I thought that it might go through change, but there was no beginning. The Bible clearly stated there was a beginning to space, time, and matter/energy. As I learned about the laws of thermodynamics, it became

increasingly apparent that matter/energy could not be eternal. Today, quantum mechanics and relativity have added new evidence that there was a beginning. That idea is now scientifically accepted.

If there was a beginning, it had to be caused. We can say that we do not know enough to understand the cause. However, the deeper we go into the quantum world, the more obvious it is that the creation started from a cause outside of space and time. God is a causer outside of space and time. He created them. The fact that there are purpose and design in the cosmos eliminates chance as a causer. We have a large volume of material on this, which you can find on our websites.

Consider where your faith will take you. Where did my father’s faith in education take him? Did it make him happy, secure, and fulfilled? Examine your faith. Does it give you a reason to live, a purpose in existing? Does your faith allow you to deal with the problems that life brings to us all?

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booklets and more: [www.doesgodexist.org](http://www.doesgodexist.org)

All of us know people who have tried to base their lives on the alternatives to faith in God. Does making a lot of money lead to a meaningful life? Does becoming a political leader bring joy, content-



ment, and peace? Do recreational drugs fulfill us as humans?

I have had a lot of adversity in my life. My history includes having a child with multiple handicaps, losing my wife to death, not having much money, and having physical problems and pain. I have struggled and wept and wondered why. Despite all of that, I have had a good and enjoyable life. Does your faith foundation enable

you to deal with life's problems?

Now I am nearing the end of my life, but it is only the end of my physical existence. My faith allows me to be confident that something better lies ahead. I have hope and peace with the fact that I will die. I see that I have had a purpose in living and my feeble existence turned out to leave the world a better place than I found it. That is because I have been able to share my faith with others and enable them to find joy in living.

Jesus makes a promise to those who choose to build their lives on faith in God:

Come unto me, all of you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and LEARN of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30, emphasis added)

Do not listen to religionists or secular philosophers or the pleasure peddlers of our world. They will give you an unproven faith that does not work. Examine your faith and build it by learning and growing in your understanding of God.

—JNC

# Mountains and Valleys

by Roland Earnst



Mountains are an essential part of the landscape of our planet. They affect our climate, they divide our geography, and they add beauty to our scenery. They are “storehouses of the snow” (Job 38:22), preserving precious water that feeds mountain springs to water the valleys. Mountains also provide recreation in the form of hiking, skiing, and mountain climbing.

Tectonic or volcanic forces form the mountains. The outer shell of Earth, called the lithosphere, consists of seven large tectonic plates and many smaller ones. Mountains form where those plates move against one another, pushing up the surface. Volcanoes also erupt at those joints when molten rock, called magma, breaks out from inside the Earth. Mountains can grow or change quickly when a volcano erupts or very gradually through the movement of tectonic plates. They also erode gradually by the action of wind, rain, and glaciers.

The highest mountain peak on Earth is Mt. Everest in the Himalayas between Nepal and Tibet. It rises to 29,032 feet or 8,849 meters above sea level and was formed by tectonic action. However, it is not the world’s tallest mountain. That distinction goes to Mauna Kea in Hawaii, which is more than 33,500 feet (10,210 meters) when measured from its base on the ocean floor. It was formed by volcanic action.



Mount Everest



Mauna Kea with Observatories

Because the volcanic and tectonic forces bring minerals from inside the Earth to the surface, the mountain formation process is essential for life on Earth. Volcanic soil is very fertile and productive for agriculture. Where mountains are too steep for farming, they can be sources of useful minerals from inside the

Earth.

At the high mountain elevations, the climate is much colder, and the air is thinner, creating various ecosystems at various levels. Each ecosystem has its own flora and fauna providing a rich diversity of life on our planet. Mountains also offer excellent locations for astronomical observatories above the pollution and distortion of our atmosphere.

If you have ever gone to the top of a mountain, you know that it is an exciting experience. I have hiked, driven, and taken a ski lift to the top of mountains in various parts of the United States. We use the term “mountaintop experience” to describe a high point in our lives or in our faith. We can apply that term to the experience of several Bible characters.

Noah experienced God’s protection and grace through the flood, which placed the ark on a mountaintop where God made a covenant with him. Abraham journeyed to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. There God released him from that terrible moment and provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in jubilation with his son. On Mount Sinai, Moses was in God’s presence as he received instructions written by the hand of God. On Mount Carmel, Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal, and God showed his power. Jesus was transfigured on a mountain in a miracle experienced by his closest disciples. There Moses and Elijah, men with previous mountaintop experiences, appeared with Jesus. On the Mount of Olives, Jesus taught his disciples.

However, in this life, we cannot stay on the mountaintop forever, and



the valleys can be very deep and dark. It was on the Mount of Olives that Jesus was betrayed by Judas and forsaken by the other disciples.



Noah became drunk on wine after he had survived the flood and received God's covenant. After Elijah's mountaintop experience, he ran for his life to escape the wrath of Jezebel.

We have mountains and valleys in our lives. God gives us the moun-

taintop experiences to sustain us through the valleys. The COVID-19 valley has been a challenge for people worldwide, but for Christians, we know that something better is ahead. As he fled from Jezebel,

Elijah ran to another mountain, Mount Horeb, where God spoke to him in a soft whisper and sustained him with food and water. King David built his city on Mount Zion, and in that city of Jerusalem, Jesus was tried and sentenced. As



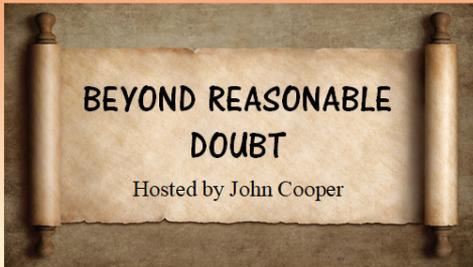
he climbed Mount Calvary, he gave us the gift of grace and hope to sustain us through our deepest valleys.

No, we cannot always remain on the mountaintop. We must go down into the valley where there are people who need to know God's love. We can be thankful that Jesus climbed Mount Calvary, where he showed us his love and grace. Mountains are a blessing from God that give us a better view of the universe, the world, and life.



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# SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!



We have just completed a new video series with John Cooper, recorded at the Clayton Museum of Ancient History!

You can order a 3 DVD set from DOES GOD EXIST? Or you can watch it online for free at [DoesGodExist.TV](http://DoesGodExist.TV).

We will have much more information about it in the next issue of this quarterly.

## BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

This series of lectures deals with biblical archaeology, the reliability of the Scriptures, and the divinity of Jesus. Your speaker is John Cooper, a Christian minister whose study and travels have given him a broad knowledge of the subject matter. The series uses video and photographs of important archaeological sites and artifacts. It was recorded in the Clayton Museum of Ancient History at York College in York, Nebraska.



- 1-Introduction (26 minutes)
- 2-The Textual Reliability of the Bible (25 minutes)
- 3-Old Testament Archaeology Part 1 (29 minutes)
- 4-Old Testament Archaeology Part 2 (28 minutes)
- 5-New Testament Archaeology Part 1 (23 minutes)
- 6-New Testament Archaeology Part 2 (28 minutes)
- 7-The Inspiration of the Bible (37 minutes)
- 8-The Historicity of Jesus (31 minutes)
- 9-The Divinity of Jesus (32 minutes)

# SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's Note: Our thanks to Tihomir Dimitrov on the nobelists.net website for quotations from many of the founders of modern science who were also fundamental believers in the God of the Bible. As we share these quotations we are reminded that being a good scientist is not at odds with belief in God.

## Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Founder of the Scientific Inductive Method

“There are two books laid before us to study, to prevent our falling into error; the first, the volume of Scriptures, which reveal the will of God; then the volume of the creatures, which express His power.”

“It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. For while the mind of men looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go on no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.”



“The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First he breathed light, upon the face of matter or chaos; then he breathed light, into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light, into the face of his chosen.”

From “Of Truth” Essays written in 1601. Reproduced in 1875 and printed in <http://nobelist.tripod.com/id4.html>.

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## *Cynthia's Corner*

### **The Lesson from Pandemic Responses**



My husband's ministry has always been about the symbiotic relationship between faith and science. God never calls us to blind faith but gives us evidence and reasons to believe that he does exist and that his Word is true. God gave us a brain to think, reason, evaluate, judge, and make wise decisions based on facts and truth. Acting purely on emotions, feelings, hunches, or what humans have told us is not faith and is not pleasing to God. In all areas of life, God expects us to act on facts and reality. This has never been more necessary than while we live through a deadly pandemic. Our decisions can directly affect our health and maybe our lives and the lives of those we love.

During a medical pandemic, we must listen to those who give us reliable, truthful information based on facts and data. Would that be politicians, or is it medical experts who deal with infectious diseases and who are on the front lines of treating those with COVID-19? Just as you can find thousands of opinions about God, Jesus, and the Bible, you can also find numerous opinions about the pandemic. Whose advice we listen to determines our actions. The same is true of our faith. If our theology and beliefs come from the Bible only, our lives will reflect those beliefs.

Our country is divided and polarized because of all the different information sources we choose to listen to and believe. Some information is based on facts, and some is far from reality. It took thousands of deaths to make some people start listening to sound medical advice. Wearing a mask, washing our hands, social distancing, and getting vaccinated can protect ourselves and others. A selfish, uninformed attitude is contrary to what God teaches us.

All of us have been touched by this pandemic. Some, like John and I, have had the virus touch our loved ones. Most of us know someone who has been stricken. In the days of Moses, leprosy was the pandemic, and there may have been those who did not want to do what the experts told them (see Leviticus 13–15). The priests were dealing with symptoms they could observe, but the remedy for the disease was difficult. We Christians have difficult choices, but God expects us to listen to medical authorities and follow their safety guidelines to protect ourselves and others. Let us learn from God's Word about what his people had to do to stop leprosy and be thankful for the advantages medical science gives us today.

—Cynthia Clayton

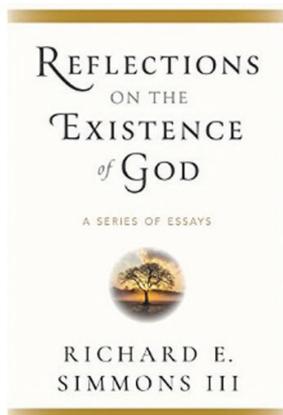
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The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

### **Reflections on the Existence of God**

by Richard E. Simmons III, Union Hill Publishing, © 2019,  
299 pages (hardcover), \$4.99 Kindle, ISBN-13: 978-1939358-22-6



If you have an interest in apologetics and can afford to buy one book, this is the one I would recommend to you. The book is a collection of essays that Simmons has written, which he has organized into ten chapters. The articles are not long and are not hard to read. They are not predominantly about scientific arguments but reasonable belief. The first six chapters deal with moral arguments, the existence of evil, and the psychological difficulties with atheism. The last four chapters deal with science and faith.

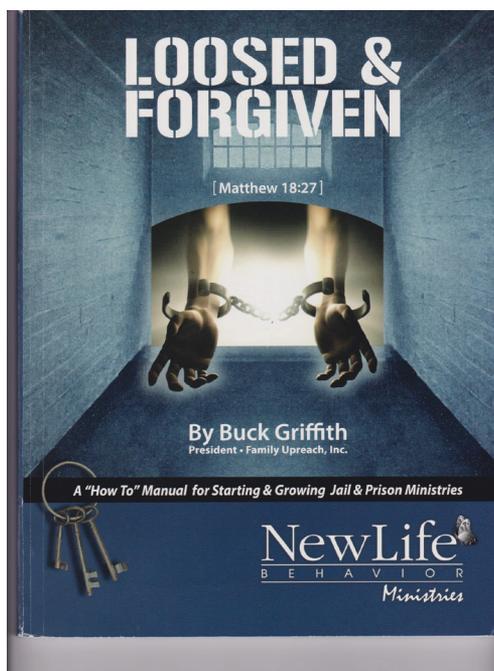
Simmons does a beautiful job of showing the impossibility of logically and practically being an atheist. He shows the philosophical and psychological problems of atheism and clearly indicates that atheists practice “willful blindness” to defend their position. He shows that the new atheism ignores the massive amount of evidence for God’s existence and the lack of evidence for atheist claims.

The real strength of this book is its documentation. Simmons has spent a lifetime reading just about every major literary work on the subjects he covers. There are 308 quotes in the book of statements by atheists, philosophers, scientists, and historians. They are all documented and make the book a gold mine of quotes from the leading figures in those areas.

This is the kind of book you can give to a family member or associate struggling with faith or considering the rejection of Christianity. The book does not promote any denomination but is simply a support for faith.

## Loosed & Forgiven

by Buck Griffith, New Life Behavior Ministries, © 2020  
158 pages (paperback), \$14.95, ISBN-13: 978-0-9843758-7-5



We have been working with incarcerated men and women since 1960. Building a prison ministry is a challenge, but it is much needed. I cannot tell you how many times I have had a prisoner say to me, “My life is over; nothing matters anymore.” This is especially true of black men and women in prison.

One of the heroes of prison ministries is a man named Buck Griffith. He has been responsible for the conversion of literally thousands of prisoners. Not only has Buck done one-on-one work in the prisons, but he also started a program

to help people with drug problems. The program called New Life Behavior Ministries features Christians Against Substance Abuse (CASA) and provides psychological help and support for prisoners.

There is a desperate need for Christians to get involved in helping families and individuals whose lives have been upended. Buck has released this book titled *Loosed & Forgiven* to help individuals and churches build a prison ministry. This 158-page book has 12 chapters. The titles of the chapters tell you about its content: Getting Started; A Planned Approach; A Few Things About Crime; Materials, and Tools; Wardens and Chaplains; Ministering to Females (two chapters); Addiction Recovery; Funding the Ministry; Follow Up on Those Released; Sex Offenders; Writing to Prisoners.

Prison ministry can be frustrating, and you should not underestimate Satan’s influence. When Satan has had his way with a man or woman, helping that person change life-course is an incredibly rewarding ministry. Buck Griffith has opened the door to building a prison ministry with this book. Congregations or individuals who want to help meet a great need can use it as a guide to get involved.

# DANDY DESIGNS

## A POWERFUL SHRIMP



They have the force to break an oyster shell or the glass of an aquarium with a single blow. Because of their powerful claws, people who have tried to pick them up have called them “thumb splitters.” Their real name is peacock mantis

shrimp (*Odontodactylus scyllarus*). They are essential predators in shallow tropical and sub-tropical waters from Guam to East Africa.

Peacock mantis shrimp use their claws like hammers to smash their prey at 10,000 times the acceleration due to gravity. The supersonic motion of the shrimp’s claws creates cavitation bubbles. Those tiny bubbles of water vapor collapse at supersonic speed, making shock waves that cause a second impact on the victim. This action creates not only sound waves but also small amounts of light. The cavitation force can be greater than the initial impact of the hammering by the claw, and it can damage steel boat bottoms and propellers.

The kind of force that peacock mantis shrimp can produce is not possible with muscle motion. Mantis shrimp use a saddle-shaped spring to release the energy in milliseconds. But the spring is no good without the muscular power to load the spring. But that is not enough because there also has to be a trigger to catch and then release the spring. All three of those parts must be in place to activate the powerful hammer.

The design of this system goes even further. If the shrimp released that energy with an ordinary claw, it would smash the claw to pieces. So the claw has to be designed with super strength and a flexible joint system to allow motion at supersonic speed. All of those things must be designed into the shrimp simultaneously for the system to work. This design gives evidence of a Master Engineer.

# THE EYES ARE SPECIAL



There are more than 450 species of mantis shrimp with many of the same features as the colorful peacock mantis. The mantis shrimp's amazing striking ability is evidence of engineering design, but these shrimp also have the most elaborate visual system and complex eyes of any animal. Their

compound eyes are mounted on mobile stalks they can move independently by specially-designed muscles. This allows the mantis shrimp to look in any direction with each eye and follow fast motion.

Human eyes have receptors for red, blue, green, and luminosity. This mantis shrimp's eyes have 16 color receptors. That allows them to see light spectra and colors which humans cannot see, including ultra-violet (UV) light. They can even tune the receptors for different spectral wavelengths depending on their environment, tuning in the colors they need to see and tuning out others. Each eye is divided into three regions like looking through three cameras. This gives these shrimp excellent depth perception which they need to accurately strike with supersonic speed.

Mantis shrimp eyes can also detect polarized light in different planes to help them see through water reflections. With so much visual data to transfer, these shrimp have multiple parallel data streams from their eyes to their brains. However, much of the data is processed in the eyes to prevent overloading the shrimp's tiny brain.

Further study of the mantis shrimp's ability may lead scientists to develop improved optical media scanners. Scientists also hope the mantis shrimp's ability to detect circular-polarized light will lead to developing systems to detect cancer cells and to study the activity of neurons in humans. The amazing engineering design in the mantis shrimp could not have happened without an intelligent Designer.

# News and Notes

**STAY UP-TO-DATE ON NEWS AND NOTES:** The stories in News and Notes are condensed from articles previously published on our website [www.DoesGodExist.today](http://www.DoesGodExist.today). You can use the QR codes with each of these articles to see the original posts for more details and references. There are also many other interesting and informative articles on that website each day. We encourage you to follow us daily on “Does God Exist? Today.” On that website, you can also subscribe to our free weekly e-mail update. We call it “The Best of the Week from DOES GOD EXIST?” It contains links to the most popular of our posts on DGE? Today and our Facebook page ([Facebook.com/evidence4god](https://Facebook.com/evidence4god)).

**OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY WITH JOHN CLAYTON:** Because of the COVID pandemic, we have suspended our lectureship schedule. In place of that, we are providing an opportunity for congregations to have a lectureship electronically. We want to give the readers of this publication the same opportunity to study with John Clayton.



We will mail you a DVD of the first four lectures in our video series. You or your group can watch the four programs writing down questions and challenges to the material. Please send us your questions via e-mail or postal mail, and John Clayton will respond to them. If you are satisfied with that material, return the DVD, and we mail you the next one. Your only cost is the return postage for the DVD.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please send us your name and address, and we will send you the first DVD. Watching the Does God Exist? presentations in the comfort of your home is an excellent way to receive the information without risk from COVID or the inconvenience of driving to a lectureship site. E-mail your request to John Clayton at [jncdge@aol.com](mailto:jncdge@aol.com).

**BEE DEFENSE AGAINST KILLER HORNETS:** There is a war between killer hornets and honey bees. The large hornets invade the honey bees' hives, carry off the bee larvae, and feed them to their offspring. After creating problems in Asia, the killer hornets arrived in Europe, Canada, and the United States in 2019.



Some hope came after researchers found that the bees develop a defense against killer hornets in Vietnam. The bees collect buffalo dung and pack it around the entrances to their hives, reducing hornet intrusions by 94%. This surprised people who work with bees because bees are very careful to prevent contamination of their hives. Any attempt to give an evolutionary explanation to this defense system is doomed because there has not been enough time for behavioral changes to evolve.



**COMMUNIST CHINESE BIBLE REVISION:** The persecution of Christians in China continues to be severe. It is estimated that there are 60 million Christians in China, but half of them are in unregistered churches. Our Chinese materials are mostly in the hands of unregistered Christians, and a vast percentage of those are in university settings. A new tactic against the gospel is a Bible revision by the Communist Chinese government.

John 8:3–11 tells about a woman taken in adultery and brought before Jesus by the religious leaders. The leaders said that she should be stoned, but Jesus replied, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” In the Communist Chinese government’s version, Jesus says that the law has to be enforced, and he stones the woman to death.



**GOD’S DIVERSITY OF BIRDS:** An international team of researchers working on the “Bird 10,000 Genomes Project” has published the genomes for 363 species of birds, covering roughly 92% of all modern bird families. The scientists in the project are determined not to stop until they have published the genomes of all bird species on Earth. They have a big job ahead because there are around 10,000 species.

God did not create all those bird species independently of one another. He gave them genomes that allowed them to adapt to different environments. Those environments could support other forms of life only because birds supply nutrients and resources that make life possible. Bird migrations can provide the needs for environments thousands of miles



apart, like the Arctic tern and the bar-tailed godwit show. Birds not only disperse the seeds of plants, but their eggs provide food for various animals.

**ATHEISM AS A BUSINESS ENTERPRISE:** Like many other religions, there is a movement toward atheism as a business enterprise. *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine devotes a large percentage of its content to attacking various Christian groups, and there is no shortage of targets for this magazine. Between young earth groups, TV evangelists, and miracle-claiming churches, there is always something to which the magazine can apply destructive scientific research.

The problem is that the Center for Inquiry condemns all religious faith and all biblical interpretations with the same condemnation. In a recent letter to the membership, their executive director announced that they are hiring a marketing director “to expand and broaden their legal challenges, educational offerings, community building and creating and sharing evidenced resources.” Of course, they were appealing for donations to accomplish their goals.

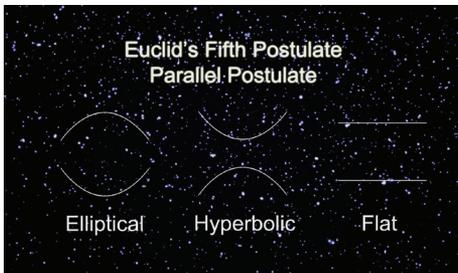
Commercial atheism is a religion. It is based on faith in a selected group of writers whose material is produced without peer review in most cases and is frequently highly prejudiced. They ignore the work of experts who have religious faith.

As the world blindly moves toward the rejection of God, and especially Christianity, we can expect atheism as a business enterprise to become a high dollar operation. We need to avoid the shysters, hypocrites, and false teachers in religion while responding to the atheists’ challenges. The need for that has never been greater.



**WHAT SHAPE IS SPACE?** A question that astronomers have been working on for years is, “What is the shape of space?” The latest technical tools have answered this question, and it has significant apologetic value for those of us who believe in God.

There are three possible shapes to space. It can be elliptical, hyperbolic, or flat. A mathematician would express this in geometric terms using Euclid’s fifth postulate. The fifth postulate assumes a flat geometry for terrestrial purposes, as high school plane geometry textbooks tell us.



So what is the shape of space? In an elliptical universe, all parallel lines would

eventually meet. If you go far enough into outer space, you would eventually curve back to where you started. In other words, if you had perfect vision and a perfectly clear sky, you could see the back of your head by looking far enough out into space. Light would curve following the shape of space.

In a hyperbolic universe, light going out into space would curve, but the curve would never close. It would just keep on curving, and parallel lines would never meet no matter how far they go.

It turns out that space is flat or planar. The implications of this discovery are enormous. Since the universe is expanding, the creation is clearly not oscillating. It will not collapse back on itself and start over again as it would in an elliptical universe. In a planar or flat universe, there are no repeats. Physical reincarnation can never happen. God created the universe with a shape and laws that apply in a flat universe following Euclid's fifth postulate. Genesis 1:1 rings more true than we ever imagined.



**SAFE HAVEN BABY BOX:** In the Dark Ages, nuns of the Roman Catholic church would put a “baby box” near the door of the convent because people were leaving babies on the doorstep, frequently in unsanitary conditions. The baby boxes contained swaddling clothes and were kept clean. In America today, an organization called Safe Haven Baby Boxes has revived this with some 21st-century technology.

A Safe Haven Baby Box is installed in an exterior wall of a fire station or hospital. It has an exterior door that automatically locks upon the placement of a newborn inside. An interior door allows a worker to reach the baby from the inside. When someone places a baby in the box, it triggers an alarm, so workers know to pick up the baby. The boxes are temperature-controlled to prevent risk to the baby, although the average wait time to pick up the infant is three minutes.



The baby box idea allows a woman who has a baby a “red tape free” way of making sure the child has a legal adoption while keeping the birth mother anonymous. Since the program began in April 2016, there have been 52 baby boxes installed in Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio. Eight babies have been surrendered in Safe Haven Baby Boxes, and three were abandoned to firefighters at baby box locations. Safe Haven has also referred over 500 women to crisis pregnancy centers.



**ESCAPE THE HUMAN NOISE:** Sometimes Jesus wanted to be by himself, away from the crowds and even his disciples. He was God in the flesh, but he needed to escape the human noise. There are times in my life when I just want silence. There is an island on Saganaga Lake in Ontario where my family built a cabin. I love going there because all you can hear is the wind and the waves.

The December 2020 issue of *Scientific American* carried an interesting article about human noise. Amazingly, human noise produces seismic vibrations that can be measured by instruments as deep as 400 meters below Earth's surface. Scientific studies of seismic vibrations in 172 locations worldwide showed that when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the volume of human noise fell by 50% in some places. When you add up the noise of trains, buses, planes, and cars, the noise level is very high. It is not enough to cause earthquakes, but it does have other effects.

The big question for science to answer is, what effect noise has on not just humans but the world as a whole? Are animals affected by the noise levels we create? How does noise affect a child's ability to concentrate? Do noise levels affect the concentration and productivity of workers in a factory? Are some forms of mental illness affected or even caused by our exposure to noise?

Noise has a role in the Old Testament. Some passages emphasize the need for quiet. Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God; ... ." After the noise of wind, earthquake, and fire, God spoke to Elijah in a soft whisper (1 Kings 19:11 – 13). All of us need to escape the human noise of this world and have a quiet time to focus on God and quietly glorify Him.



## **SUPREME COURT AND CHIKE UZUEGBUNAM:**

Can college officials censor public speeches that promote religious issues on campus? In many cases, students have been punished or



expelled for promoting Christian values or Christianity as a life choice. Most of the cases have been settled out of court, but the U.S. Supreme Court will hear Chike Uzuegbunam's case.

Uzuegbunam is a young man who was talking about his faith in Christ at Gwinnett College in Georgia. College officials stopped him and disciplined him for his words. The college maintains that the constitution does not protect speech sharing religious beliefs, and Chike Uzuegbunam filed a lawsuit against the school. This case will bring before the Supreme Court whether universities can ignore the First Amendment and shut down religious speech on campus. This subject has enormous implications for the whole country.



**TWIN STUDY IN SPACE:** Mark and Scott Kelly are identical twins, and both are astronauts. Scott lived aboard the International Space Station for a year. Mark remained on Earth and lived his normal lifestyle. In the Space Station, fluids swelled around Scott's upper body and head, his immune system worked overtime, and his metabolism was altered. Of greatest interest to scientists was that Scott's genetic makeup—his DNA—had been damaged.

There are protective structures called telomeres at the ends of our chromosomes. These structures get shorter with age and put the person more at risk for age-related illnesses. In Scott's case, the telomeres became shorter. In addition to the changes in the telomeres, Scott's eye shape changed, and his vision weakened. His cognitive speed also decreased. Scott's risk of heart disease measurably increased.



What conclusion can we draw from the data of the twin study in space? The human body was designed for living on planet Earth. Even a small change in environmental characteristics can make genetic changes that can be detrimental to human health. We will have challenges if we start traveling great distances into space in the future.



**WEBSITE NEWS:** We are in the fifth year of daily posts on DoesGodExist.today. That website features the kind of information found in this publication in the “News and Notes,” “Dandy Designs,” and occasionally, “Book Reviews” columns. However, because Does God Exist? Today is published daily, the information is more up-to-date. This website continues to grow in worldwide outreach, thanks to our loyal followers.

In addition to daily posts on the DoesGodExist.today website, we publish daily on our Facebook page. The posts on that page deal with evidence for design in living things. On our DoesGodExist.tv website, you can view our entire video series and find access to our audio series and other materials. On DoesGodExist.org you can read past issues of this publication, plus many other articles.

Thank you for reading and sharing this publication and our posts. We appreciate your feedback and support making it possible for us to tell people around the world that God exists and that he loves them.

**Visit the Clayton Museum  
of Ancient History at  
York College, York, Neb.**



This journal is a part of a program of service titled **Does God Exist?** The purpose of the program is to provide thinking, seeking people with scientific evidence that God does exist and that the Bible is his Word. It is our conviction that all men can logically and rationally believe in God. In addition to this quarterly journal, the **Does God Exist?** program offers DVDs, CDs, courses, books, and other materials. These materials are offered on a loan basis or at our cost. We also are more than willing to correspond with you and answer any specific question(s) you might have. If you would like further information on borrowing or purchasing these materials, we would be glad to send it to you. Check the boxes below to describe what you would like and mail it to us. We will get it right out to you.

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Periodicals

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