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EXAMINING EVIDENCE  
GOD  
FOR A  
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FAITH RELATIONSHIP  
TRUST?

BRAD CAULEY, DMIN



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# PREFACE

**I remember watching** a respected TV program I enjoyed as a young adult, when I heard someone whom I admired assert that God did not exist and called those who practice religion “superstitious.” Ouch! I was practicing religion myself. This began in me an extended process of wrestling with my faith in God. I wanted to know for sure if my faith was based on “superstition” or real evidence.

This book recounts my spiritual journey that ultimately led to a strong faith in the existence of God, but it was not without struggling to understand, and I can’t say that I ever found the one hundred percent tangible proof I’d hoped to find.

In this book I share what I discovered that led me to a stronger faith in God, though I still have questions to which I seek answers.

How about you? How has your faith journey been?

Have you ever wondered if the claims of Christianity are too good to be true? I have! I mean, come on, really—that we may live *forever* if we believe in and follow Jesus? This is hard to grasp, because we have never seen it before in our reality. I mean, FOREVER life UNENDING with God in a paradise! It’s nearly *incomprehensible* to me!

If this is all true, then it changes everything about everything! If it is not true, then why bother with any religion? Given the possibilities, it is worth exploring, wouldn’t you say? We are not referring to what the weather is going to be like tomorrow or what we should wear. The implications of eternity are as far reaching as one can go.

# INTRODUCTION

## APOLOGETICS, WHAT IS IT?

**What is apologetics?** Is there a need for it, particularly from an Adventist perspective? How does it relate to those who have questions, even doubts about God?

Apologetics is a formal defense or explanation of the Christian faith. Since it is a term that is not used much today, some feel the connotation must have something to do with saying one is sorry for doing something wrong. I have not yet come up with a word to better describe this term.

## APOLOGETICS?

The early church leader and apostle named Peter wrote to believers,

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.<sup>1</sup>*

*1 Peter 3:15<sup>2</sup>*

Giving an **“answer”** is from the original Greek word *apologian*, from which comes the word, apologetics, meaning a speech to defend something.

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1.Note: Bible quotations are indented and italicized and do not have general quotation marks.

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CHAPTER 1  
DOUBTING GOD





**Peter's counsel to followers of Jesus** is to always know why they believe and to be able to attractively share those reasons with nonbelievers. With a growing number of people who do not believe, it behooves Christ's followers to thoroughly know what they believe and always be able to share those beliefs. Furthermore, and maybe just as helpful, one can honestly say to others that you do not know or have an answer for some questions but would journey with them to seek one together. This may encourage the seeker that they are not alone in having such hard questions.

Moreover, it is crucial to realize that answering questions can be done in a way that wins an argument but loses the person. Few, if any, have come to faith in Jesus by losing an argument. A case in point are the actions and stances of the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas, which frequently receives media headlines. That is not genuine apologetics, nor to what Peter is referring. Authentic apologetics as Peter describes it is to share in a way that will cause others to see and desire the peace Jesus Christ has given to you.

Is there a need to defend Christianity in an appealing manner? Yes, in fact, there is more of a need than ever before, especially where Christianity is declining (i.e., the Western world).

When sharing with others who have questions, I believe Emily Dickinson's words are apropos in her short poem, "Tell all the truth but tell it slant."

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind —<sup>3</sup>

Part of sharing in an appealing manner is not to overwhelm people with too much at one time.

Even children have good questions that they would like answered. I once visited a group of 5th and 6th graders at a local Christian school. Before I arrived, they compiled a list

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3. The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

of their questions for me to answer. The questions in bold are the ones that we'll address later in this book.

1. **If God could see the future, why did He create Lucifer?**
2. **How do we know that God, Jesus, and the Bible are real?**
3. **How do we know Heaven is real?**
4. What kind of music did they have in the Bible?
5. Why is the Bible named the Bible?
6. What states and countries were discovered in Bible times?
7. **When you die, can you touch and talk to God?**
8. In your dreams, can you talk to God?
9. How many years have you been a pastor?
10. Where should you start if you want to read the Bible?
11. How does prophecy work?
12. **Why are there so many different types of Christians?**
13. If heaven will be a more perfect earth, will we be placed where we were before the second coming, or will we be placed with our families in our homes, or will we be placed wherever we wish to be?
14. Will animals be in heaven?
15. **Why did God let the Hebrew babies die in the story of Moses?**
16. **In the Bible, killing is a sin. Why does God let His people kill, like in the story of Jericho?**
17. How many people is God waiting for to take to heaven? What if people start to not believe anymore, will He come immediately?
18. What is your favorite Christian song?

As you can see, the big questions of life are already stirring in us from youth. I imagine that if people grow up not having their questions positively addressed, they may eventually lose interest in God.

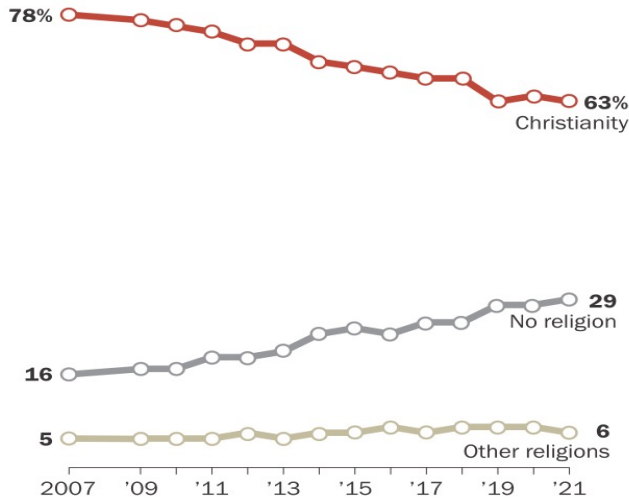
This may be what has caused a growing unbelief of the basic tenants of Christianity in American society and a rise in the number of religion-less people in both America and in the developed world.

In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, there are roughly 1 in 10 people in the U.S. who claim they are atheist or agnostic, and, there is a tendency for this 10% to be younger, male, and white.

These trends have been increasing as the share of Americans who identify as Christians is on the decline.

## In U.S., roughly three-in-ten adults now religiously unaffiliated

% of U.S. adults who identify with ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.  
 Source: Data from 2020-21 based on Pew Research Center's National Public Opinion Reference Surveys (NORS), conducted online and by mail among a nationally representative group of respondents recruited using address-based sampling. All data from 2019 and earlier from the Center's random-digit-dial telephone surveys, including the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies. See Methodology for details.  
 "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

Figure 1. Pew Research Center on changing religious affiliation. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

Pew Research Center has offered a more in depth look at the religiously unaffiliated in early 2024. In this latest data, it seems that the percentage of 'nones,' as they are often called, may have peaked in 2022 at 30%, whereas this percentage of American adults being unaffiliated was down to 28% in 2023. See the following: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>

What Pew Research Center has found in these studies is that many grew up with more Christian influence but have distanced themselves from it. Although many may point to valid reasons why they left Christianity, or more broadly, theism, the most vital question of all still is—God's existence.<sup>4</sup>

4. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 77.

If God does not even exist, then there is no afterlife, nor little need for living a moral life, etc. God's existence truly is foundational!

Another reason I am advocating for the study of apologetics, or the foundational areas of Christianity, is that it has been personally enriching. Many of the works of apologetics come in various forms, and most do not contain the name apologetics, but in nature defend the faith of Jesus. I have found studying apologetics to be very rewarding in my faith journey.

Like most people, I do have doubts at times. But, as you'll see, those who have doubts are in good company. Reviewing and digging deeper gives more substance to one's faith. It also helps one know more about what they believe. And at times it may help one adjust their thinking or beliefs.

In the general discussion of apologetics, we may lack helpful, concrete evidence of God's existence, His character, etc. This is why I ask the following:

What about apologetics from a uniquely Seventh-day Adventist perspective? Why would it be beneficial?

Firstly, Seventh-day Adventists have greatly contributed to the wider apologetics discussion. Some of these topics include the weekly Biblical Sabbath, healthy lifestyle matters, the theme of the Great Controversy, the concept of hellfire, and more. These will be developed later in chapter five.

And secondly, as someone with a seventh-day perspective I am surprised when some Christian apologists—who are used by God in a real way in this area—use Sunday observance as evidence for the resurrection, ignoring the un-biblical shift away from the Saturday Sabbath instituted by the Creator. It seems like a contradiction to me. In my view, this is an undoing of the authority of the same Creator and Redeemer who invites us to Sabbath with Him on the day that He rested. In any case, I believe the source for the mention of the Sunday change from Sabbath was well-meaning by such authors. This will be developed in more detail.

Historically, Adventists have focused on helping Christians of differing backgrounds understand biblical truths, while neglecting to have a robust outreach to non-Christians. This can no longer suffice! The number of followers of Jesus are becoming less as more and more people doubt God's very existence. So, teaching doctrines on what happens when one dies or the manner of the Second Coming of Christ, is pointless if one does not even believe that Jesus is alive today. People's spiritual understanding and beliefs are vastly

different from decades earlier. Therefore, the approach must also be accordingly adjusted. This brings us to our key question:

## HOW DOES GOD RELATE TO THOSE WHO HAVE DOUBTS?

Usually, when the following verses are read aloud or spoken, it is with the focus on the Great Commission and rightly so.

*Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’*

*Matthew 28:16-20*

It was not the enemies of Jesus that doubted His resurrection—but the ones who knew Him the best. These are the very ones who witnessed Jesus’ many miracles, even raising people from the dead! Jesus knew that they had doubts in part due to their own preconceived view of the promised messiah’s purpose. Their understanding was that He would be a messiah that would physically overthrow Roman oppression, rather than the answer for our greater predicament of sin.

The eleven remaining disciples (Judas Iscariot had already committed suicide by this time) had, among them, at least two who doubted that Jesus had come back to life. Although Thomas was among the eleven, he may not have been among the “some” to whom Matthew refers, since he exclaimed belief after seeing Jesus’ scars (see John 20:24-29). Jesus remarked on how Thomas believed only then. How could they doubt? Perhaps because it had never happened before. For the same reason, it is just as challenging for people to believe today! Jesus told Thomas that it is a blessing to believe without having tangible evidence; we can therefore take courage that God understands where we are in our faith, and is willing to help us, just as He did Thomas.

It is fascinating to me how, although there were some who doubted, Jesus told them all that, as they go about their living, they were to make disciples, baptize, and teach people all things. Helping others grow spiritually may actually help us overcome our own doubts!

God does not ask us to believe only when He gives us proof. After all, Jesus rebuked those who saw His miraculous workings but still did not move forward in faith.

Does this mean that if a person doubts God, He will write them off? What about those who *have* seen special evidence that God is who He says He is? These are very important questions I'm sure many have also asked. I believe the answer is found in part of Matthew 11:1-11:

*After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.*

*When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"*

*Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."*

*As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'"*

*"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."*

Notice that Jesus affirms John the Baptist's faith, not after he witnessed the Holy Spirit come down on Jesus, nor after hearing the Father speak from the sky at His baptism (i.e., mountaintop experiences), nor when he was proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God. He said this when John was at the lowest point of life—in a discouraging prison made for devious criminals. This brings up a question: Why would Jesus allow someone like John—his own cousin—to suffer in prison? John the Baptist is just one example of many who suffer while doing good. (The broader question of why a loving God allows suffering will be addressed in chapters 4 and 5.) When John received Jesus' message, he was, for the most part, alone, no longer able to preach, and depressed. Perhaps we should examine our emotional condition when we doubt, and understand that, just because we may feel very low and full of doubt, our feelings do not change the existence of God. It simply means we are at a low point.

Here is the evidence that John the Baptist had prior to his doubts, found in the Gospel of John 1:6-8, 15, 19-32:

*There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

*(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”)*

*Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.” They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”*

*He said, “I am not.”*

*“Are you the Prophet?”*

*He answered, “No.”*

*Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”*

*John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”*

*Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”*

*“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”*

*This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”*

*Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.”*

Let’s rewind to go to that baptismal account found in Matthew’s gospel chapter 3, verses 13-17.

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

*Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.*

*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

Notice how John boldly and unequivocally exclaims who Jesus is a little later:

*"And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."*

*The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

*When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.*

*John 1:33-37*

What about you? Have you seen clear evidence of God's presence, even His working in your life, only to wonder whether He still exists? Surely, if God actually existed before, He has not vanished, right? It certainly can seem like this at times, especially when we feel emotionally low. Perhaps some of us feel more doubtful when we are generally feeling unhappy with life. Maybe doubting Him is more about feeling disconnected from Him or depressed than about whether He is "out there."

One may ask, does Jesus ever give us tangible evidence to base our faith on when His followers are doubting? Yes, He does!

The eleven disciples were gathered with a group when two other followers ran up to them, excitedly claiming that Jesus was alive (See Luke 24:13-35). Then in Luke 24:36-43, we read:

*While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."*



*They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.*

*He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”*

*When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

Here, Jesus acknowledges that the disciples doubted the reports of His resurrection. He could have said something like, “You idiots! Didn’t I tell you this would happen beforehand? You are not good enough to be with Me.” Instead, He showed them all the evidence they needed to resolve their doubts. If Jesus did this for those who knew Him best, who lived closely with Him as His pupils, how much more is God willing to give evidence to those of us who did not live during this time?

There are many people who, through disappointments, abuse, and/or being hurt by religious people, only have some belief. How does God relate to those who do not fully believe because of life challenges?

We find this recorded in Mark 9:17-27:

*A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”*

*“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”*

*So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.*

*Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”*

*“From childhood,” he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”*

*“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”*

*Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

*When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."*

*The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.*

It's clear from this story that Jesus does accept belief or faith that is held back by some doubts. And because of this acceptance, a miracle occurred! Perhaps this shows us that God simply wants us to have enough faith to come to Him. Just think of what extraordinary things He will do for us when we come to Him with our imperfect faith! Are you willing to come to Him with what faith you have? If so, He will accept you completely, even though your faith may be incomplete.

## **ARE WE EVER EXPECTED TO HAVE BELIEF WITHOUT EVIDENCE?**

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1, it indicates that faith is having confidence in things we do not yet see. Is He out there? Should we expect to prove His own existence in order for us to have faith?

I find Ellen G. White's words to be helpful:

*God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.<sup>5</sup>*

I take from this that God is reasonable, and in turn He looks for us to be reasonable also. If a person wants to doubt, they will be able to do so. On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence to lead us towards faith. While we should not expect God to reveal Himself at our beckoning, as if we could summon Him like a genie, He will provide us "abundant" evidence for which to base our faith in Him. We merely have to pay attention. This may be difficult for some of us to accept, but God will not leave anyone hanging without giving us the help we need. God is not trying to make it as hard as possible for us to reach Him, but rather, He is doing everything He can reasonably do to *help* us reach Him.

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5. Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 105.

For those vulnerable souls who have suffered so much abuse, God meets them where they are at, totally broken and hurt, and “beyond belief.” He desires to heal their pain. Jesus, Himself tells us that He came, not just to take away the penalty of our sin, but also to take away our deepest pain. This happens through Jesus taking on abuse upon Himself so that He may heal us from our deep pain.

## SAFE SPACES NEEDED

Perhaps you recognize that you have doubts. Yet you do not feel that you’re allowed to voice questions in order to become surer in your belief. This is the central reason why I have written this book. Christian author, James Emery White, notes that seekers need a safe place to have their questions answered. He writes here from the perspective of a seeker:

*Please don't be threatened by my questions. They really are my questions, and I've had them for a long time. I hope that if Christianity is true, it can stand up under any amount of intellectual scrutiny. Anyway, I'd feel a lot better if you were less threatened when I raise questions. I'm not trying to be a jerk; I'm just trying to sort it all out, and that means asking you about all kinds of things. I know sometimes it seems combative or aggressive, but God-questions aren't exactly tame—much less safe.<sup>6</sup>*

If seekers cannot go to Christians and churches and have their sincere questions answered, where else should they go? Many times, foundational questions are seen as a threat to a Christian church environment. However, since there is a growing number of people who do have sincere questions about God, —like the father of the possessed boy, who came to Jesus with partial faith and experienced a miracle—Christians need to accepted imperfect faith—just as God accepts all our imperfection—and respond to questioning with loving care and forethought.

Christians following Jesus’ example will recognize these instances as opportunities to draw others closer to God. These can be amazing moments that have the potential to change people’s lives. Jesus’ own brother admonished believers in a time of eyewitnesses to:

*Be merciful to those who doubt.*

*Jude 22*

Of course, this does not mean churches should leave other in doubt. Intentionally providing safe places to ask honest questions is vital for others’ spiritual progress.

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<sup>6</sup>James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 113.

Throughout the remaining chapters, we will explore five key questions:

1. Is there a God?
2. Is there a Creator, or do we exist by chance?
3. Is the Bible's Old Testament true and accurate?
4. Is the New Testament true, and did Jesus really come back to life?
5. Does God want a relationship with me, personally?