

For a lot of you in this room, this won't be anything new. I know that a lot of you believe in God. For you, I have one request: Don't check out on me. As I talk, think about why you believe. My top 10 reasons probably aren't your top 10---you may not even have 10. Don't just take your belief for granted.

And consider someone you know who doesn't believe---what might I say that might help them.

And I hope some are here today that don't believe in God. I didn't come here with the mindset that I'm going to make you a believer. I just ask you one thing: try to listen with an open mind. I'm not going to hit you with collegiate-level theology—I'm just going to share my personal experiences with you.

And I am going to hit 10 things in about 25-30 minutes, so this will be a little like getting a drink out of a fire hydrant ;- ) (These are in no particular order.)

## **1. Archaeology**

Wow, I could do hours just on this topic. Basically man has been digging things up for thousands of years, and we have excavated millions of artifacts from this planet.

Here's the deal: untold numbers of excavated items things refer to people, places, and events written in the Bible.

ZERO artifacts have been excavated that controvert or disprove the Bible.

So in thousands of years, archaeology has only CONFIRMED biblical people, places or events. And NO artifacts disprove it. Archaeology doesn't prove everything biblically, but it doesn't disprove anything.

Here's just a 4 quick examples:

In the story of Moses—Pharaoh is using Hebrew slaves to build his cities out of brick, Moses ticks off Pharaoh and Pharaoh says in Exodus 5:10-12,

"I will not give you any more straw (to make bricks). Go and get your straw wherever you can find it. So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw."

Scientists unearthed cities of that time period and found that the lower level bricks were filled w/good chopped straw.

The middle level bricks with less straw including stubble picked by its roots. And the upper level contained NO straw. Could just be coincidence ;- )

In John ch. 11 we find the story of Jesus bringing Lazarus back to life after he was already placed in his tomb. You can go to the city of Bethany today and see Lazarus' tomb.

During Jesus' trial he was sent to Pontius Pilate. For thousands of years, there was no proof of a "Pontius Pilate." But in 1961 an Italian archaeologist unearthed a Roman amphitheater and found a limestone block with the inscription, "Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judea."

In regard to Jesus' death and disappearance from the tomb, we've excavated a tablet from that same time period called "The Nazareth Decree" that makes it against the law for anyone to disturb a tomb after it was sealed. And an ancient Greek historian Suetonius, wrote that the Nazareth Decree was enacted because of "Christos" or Christ as we know Him.

## **2. Charles Darwin**

For the vast majority of the last 5,000 years on Earth, we've generally speaking, believed in God.

Then in 1859—which is historically not very long ago—Darwin suggests that we evolved and were not the result of God's creation.

I'm just pointing out that very intelligent people throughout most of man's history, thought God was a viable belief.

Here's the deal: Darwin's hypothesis had a HUGE hinge pin. He theorized that we were on the verge of finding a bunch of intermediary species—missing links—in other words, animals that were in the process of evolving from one thing to another. Half fish, half bird kinds of creatures.

Dr. Colin Patterson with the British Museum of Natural History which houses 7 million fossils wrote a book on fossils. When asked why there were no pictures showing intermediary species (missing links) in his book, he replied in essence,

"I don't know of any!"

Niles Eldredge, one of the world's leading experts on invertebrate fossils said this,

"No wonder paleontologists shied away from evolution for so long. It never seems to happen. (Persistent) collecting (of fossils) up cliff faces yields zigzags, minor oscillations and the very occasional slight accumulation of change---over millions of years, at a rate too slow to account for all the (large scale) change that has occurred in evolutionary history."

So, Darwin's theory that has resulted in no missing links, contributes to my belief in God—a Creator—Designer of life.

## **3. The Bible**

When I was younger I thought, "Ok look, the Bible is a zillion years old. It's a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy. It was copied BY HAND for thousands of years before Gutenberg decided to invent the printing press. You can't get 10 people to sit in a circle and play "telephone" and get the same phrase to come out correctly---you telling me that the Bible is accurate to this day?"

When I researched the Bible what I found is in the last 4,000 years, Jewish scribes (later Christian scribes) took meticulous care to copy the Bible. It wasn't their job just to COPY the Bible, but to protect the accuracy of it.

They weren't as much like a human copy machine; they were more like an armed guard who was protecting the accuracy of God's Word.

And when a scribe finished, he turned it over to a "master examiner" who counted EVERY INDIVIDUAL LETTER to make sure there were no errors. If errors were found it was destroyed.

And really the best time to be cynical about the Bible would have been prior to 1947 because that's when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

In '47 an Arab shepherd boy discovered a hidden cave in Qumran near the Dead Sea. It had over 1,000 manuscripts, all dating prior to 68 A.D. It contained a library of both biblical & secular texts.

Cave 4 contained all of the Old Testament books except for Esther and multiple copies of Genesis, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah.

The amazing thing is that when they compared these 2,000+ year old texts to the 1611 King James version, aside from some spelling variations there were no differences.

In addition to the Dead Sea Scrolls that verify the Old Testament, we've recovered nearly 100,000 manuscripts and letters from the first few centuries A.D. Of these nearly 100,000 writings, they contain 99% of the nearly 8,000 verses in the New Testament.

And in terms of ancient writings, the Bible beats other authors that we never seem to question and doubt. There are:

10 known copies of Caesar's writings.  
7 copies of Plato's  
37 copies of Aristotle's  
And the Old Testament? 24,630! Just sayin... ;-)

(I don't have time to go into all the PROPHECIES...)

#### **4. Prayer**

God shows up in response to prayer, in ways that make otherwise normal people seem insane.

There's the story Pastor Erwin McManus documents in his book, *Unstoppable Force*.

He led his church to purchase an acre of land in downtown Dallas that no one seemed to be building on. (sacrificial giving etc)

When they went to get building permits, they found it had been a garbage dump. Core samples of the property were drilled and it was ruled "unbuildable" by the city.

A long interesting story short: they started praying that God would turn the land fill into a "land filled with people." After a while McManus's church pestered the city to drill new core samples.

Finally they did. And finally the city determined that the land was somehow, miraculously buildable.

And recently, my friend Mike. I showed a picture of him a few months ago with his guitar. He was supposed to be dead by now.

Drs. at Methodist opened him up a year ago. What they saw was cancer so bad, they simply closed him back up. In no uncertain terms they said to he and his wife,

"You need to go home and start making arrangements. Mike will slowly die—might take a year, maybe less."

And so they did. And so a lot of us started praying and asking God for healing and for more time for Mike & his family.

Another long and interesting story short: He was at his oncologist's 2 weeks ago. She looked in his file. Looked at him. Looked back in his file. She said, "Your blood work is pristine."

The doctors can find nothing wrong and they can't explain his phenomenal health.

The cancer maybe gone—it maybe just hibernating. All we know is he's living every day more alive than he every has. He goes to bed every night excited about the next day.

You might call these things “coincidence” or “flukes” or “bad drilling” or “misdiagnosis.” To me they’re just two in a list of amazing ways I’ve seen God respond to prayer.

## **5. Friends** (perhaps most impacting)

It’s easy to dismiss “beliefs.” I know it is, because for basically all of my youth I dismissed Christianity.

It didn’t make sense to me. It seemed like it was for weak minded people. It seemed to me that smarter people wouldn’t believe in God. I dismissed Christianity; it’s easy to dismiss beliefs.

But then I met some people: there was Dave. He was a senior in high school when I was a freshman. He messed up my belief system.

Christianity made sense to him. He wasn’t unintelligent, weak minded, or in need of help as far as I could tell.

And somehow this cool varsity wrestler, drummer and generally cool guy, actually took a genuine interest in me—this very un-cool, pimple-infested, awkward freshman.

A few years later there was Ray and his family. They were bright, witty, artistic people—people I could identify with.

And they were full-on Jesus freaks: Praying, fasting, church-going. But at the same time—they were normal. And I could relate with them.

And I drove them nuts asking questions that started with, “*Ok, if there IS a God...?*” And they’d be patient and never get mad that I was a dogmatic unbeliever.

It’s easy to dismiss a belief system like Christianity. It’s much harder to dismiss people that love you and that you love back.

It’s harder to dismiss people that you have more affinity with than even the other unbelievers in your life.

Friends made me question if my thoughts about Christianity were valid. And that was essentially the beginning of the end of my unbelieving life. Even though I wouldn’t accept Christ until years later in Chula Vista CA.

Beliefs are easily dismissed as stupid or whatever. Good friends are much harder to dismiss.

## **6. Jesus**

I couldn’t get my head around Jesus. I couldn’t understand this plan—this idea that this all-powerful God decided that the way to reach me and every other thick-headed person on the planet was to have His innocent Son die an unfathomable death on a cross.

And maybe that was when I started to realize that there’s something to this God. Because He came up with a plan, that I never would or could cook up.

If I were god, I’m sure I would have devised some sane pragmatic idea based on what was fair.

But Jesus—being who He was—this sinless and by all accounts, incredible man---made me come to terms with what grace—forgiveness, really is.

And I think a part of me was quite relieved that His plan had nothing to do with fairness-- me getting what I deserved.

As an unbeliever I thought I knew what love was, even though it wasn't modeled very well in the bizarre home I grew up in. But looking at Jesus, reading about Him---only proved that I really didn't know what true love meant.

All accounts say He didn't fight to stay off the cross. So his love and trust of His Father went galaxies beyond anything *I* knew of love.

And then God, loving people like me—people who'd already done a great deal of sinning by the time I was in my teens. God loving people like me enough, to send his Son to pay for my sin and wipe out all the things I did "in the name of fun" while at the same time not believing in Him.

That was a mind bender. God sacrificed His Son-- even though people wouldn't believe.

I can't imagine sacrificing my son for anyone—let alone people who were going to keep on sinning and believing whatever they wanted to. Only Jesus. Only God.

## **7. Science**

As I've studied Christianity and science, I am more convinced than ever there's more evidence for God than for evolution.

Here's science's view of life, in a nutshell:

First there was a Big Bang. Which means out of nothingness, there was a vacuum. And then there was an explosion in that vacuum that created the Milky Way galaxy.

From rim to rim our galaxy is 200,000 light years across. (ONE light year is the distance light travels in a year. You could travel around the world in 8/10s of a second at the speed of light.

OK, so out of nothing an explosion creates a galaxy 200,000 light years across; so big, we cannot comprehend it.

Then, after this big bang that created earth, just out of chance, a warm little pond of ooze or goop is created. Then somehow, a cell; one cell spontaneously originates in the ooze.

What's a cell? A cell is the smallest unit of any organism (repeat). But inside just ONE cell, in its genes and chromosomes, there's about a trillion bits of data, scientists tell us.

A trillion is about how many individual letters exist in all of the books in the world's largest library.

Science tells us that life forms are made up of billions of these cells that are placed in perfect order.

As one scientist put it, the mathematical odds of a cell spontaneously originating containing trillions of bits of data, then somehow spontaneously forming with millions of other cells in just the right order, is in the same line of thinking that an explosion going off in a print shop could result in a dictionary!

Listen---in 2010—with the world's greatest scientists in the most spectacular laboratories, with unlimited budgets—we cannot make life happen out of non-life.

But science says, after this explosion, life just came from the ooze and then life began evolving.

Even though since 1859 when Darwin wrote his book, there's no proof of the ooze and no proof of evolving species. Science keeps sticking to its hypothesis in spite of having no evidence.

And even in the scientific community, we're hearing the phrase "scientific design" more and more. Why?

Because the hypothesis of life from the ooze morphing into new life is not holding scientific water. Scientific method requires proof—it needs evidence.

The more I see science studying the intricacies and complexities of life on this planet, the more I'm baffled that science doesn't become more open to the idea that there could be a Creator, a Designer. Rather than random life that just happens.

## **8. Human Race.**

I think history is a profound teacher. In the history of the world there have been phenomenal cultures:

Romans

Greeks

Mayans

Egyptians

Ottoman Empire

Chinese Dynasties

British Empire

They all had awe-inspiring runs, invented things, ways of thinking, and concepts we still use today. But when I look historically at civilizations that do not embrace God, I see civilizations that slowly fall from greatness.

As powerful and amazing as all these cultures were (and they were!), in and of themselves. they crumble. So when I look at the history of great civilizations, I see that man cannot sustain himself.

And even now, with our current American civilization (one of the great civilizations), there is statistically a turning away from God and a trend to believe in ourselves, a trend to believe in science over a Designer, a trend to believe in creativity over a Creator, etc.

And as we turn away from God culturally, I do not observe lives getting better—rather, the lives of people in my city grow more complex, more unhappy, more unhealthy.

So the human race historically and currently gives me reason to hope in a Higher Power, because I do not see the evidence for me to put my hope in man—no offense.

## **9. Lot's of intelligent people were Christ followers.**

This may sound funny, but I think it helps us to be more humble when we consider that people more gifted and more brilliant than us, believed in God.

The music that we still listen to today by Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Bach and Mendelssohn was composed to bring honor and focus the listener's attention to God.

The finest paintings by Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci were inspired by God and reflect God's image.

And here are some people who believed in God that you may have heard of:

C.S. Lewis

J.R.R. Tolkein

Galileo  
Isaac Newton  
Soren Kierkegaard  
St Francis of Assisi  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
Copernicus  
Sir Francis Bacon  
Albert Einstein  
Not to mention founding fathers & untold presidents of our country.  
I could go on & on...

## **10. Eternity**

I think even when I didn't want to believe in God, I wanted to believe that there was a heaven and that I could go.

Sometimes all I know about life here is that every day brings challenges. Life has blessings and gifts—but life is work and it's challenging.

- > Tues. I went to a viewing for a baseball coach who had a heart attach at 39.
- > My mother will not live forever.
- > I may or may not see grandchildren or great grandchildren.
- > Something bad could happen on our way home today.

But Jesus said in John 14:1-4

"Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust Me. There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know where I am going and you know how to get there."

There's nothing scientific here...it's simply that my soul resonates with the idea that life doesn't stop when my heart stops beating.

My soul resonates with the idea of being in a place that knows no tears and knows intimacy with God unlike anything I know here.

And if I can be honest, something in me fears the idea of a hellish eternity described with a phrase like being in "darkness" where there's "gnashing of teeth." (Matt 8:12)

Something in my soul simply believes in Heaven.

If you want to talk more about these things you can always email me through my website [morgancafe.com](http://morgancafe.com) and of course the great Gene Rund is always here for your tough questions or simply to talk about the struggle that it is to come to Christ.

(prayout)