

An Introduction to a New Tactical Tuesday Series

Christianity in the Crosshairs

Answering the 10 Objections Skeptics Raise Most Often

By [Chaplain Todd DuBord \(M.Div.\)](#)



These Questions Were Mine Before They Were Yours

A child dies while her parents pray, and her father wonders what it means to call God loving. A woman watches another war destroy homes and families and asks why an all-powerful God does not intervene. Someone else has searched, prayed, and waited, yet finds God's presence anything but obvious.

A college student looks at sincere Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist friends and wonders how Christians can claim that Jesus is the only way. A mother struggles to understand how a loving God could permit eternal punishment, while another reader encounters Old Testament warfare or slavery and wonders whether the Bible's moral authority survives its own pages. A young adult asks whether Christian teachings about sexuality, marriage, and identity offer wisdom or impose harm.

Others look at religious persecution, church scandals, or a Christian leader's hypocrisy and ask why they should trust a faith whose followers have sometimes betrayed it so badly. A viewer encounters a confident video claiming that Jesus was copied from pagan gods or turned into God by later church councils. A thoughtful nonbeliever loves his family, helps his neighbors, and sees no reason to believe Christianity is necessary for a good life.

And then there is a question that sounds like science fiction: could an extraterrestrial civilization have deliberately seeded life on Earth? Nobel laureate Francis Crick and fellow researcher Leslie Orgel explored that possibility in a scientific paper, and even Richard Dawkins entertained it hypothetically in his interview with Ben Stein. Our bonus investigation will ask what they actually meant, whether evidence supports the idea, and whether it answers the question of a Creator—or simply moves the mystery to another planet.

These are not merely questions for a philosophy classroom; they emerge wherever the promises people hear about God collide with the world they actually experience. Each question presses beyond what Christians believe to whether those beliefs are true, just, and worthy of trust. Together, these challenges bring us to the question this series will confront: **Can Christianity withstand an honest examination of its hardest claims?**

Before we begin, I want the skeptic reading this to know who is speaking. You are not hearing from someone who has spent his entire life inside a religious bubble and now wonders why everyone outside it refuses to agree. I am not approaching you as a hypocritical preacher whose only interest is recruiting you into his religious camp. I was once an atheist myself—raised in an atheist California household, and many of the questions behind these investigations were my questions long before they became subjects I would teach or write about.

That search for answers began more than forty years ago, and it continued through undergraduate and graduate study and for the next four decades. Questions about existence, suffering, morality, religious claims, biblical origins, and Jesus became investigations I revisited as my knowledge grew.

For nearly twenty years, that journey also included working alongside Chuck and Gena Norris as their researcher and co-author, collaborating on three books and more than 2,000 columns addressing cultural issues. That work repeatedly challenged me to investigate difficult subjects, check sources, and explain complicated questions to readers from many different backgrounds. A familiar name cannot settle a question about God, but those years helped shape how I approach the questions we will examine here. (CrossFireUSA, [Books & Other Helps](#).)

During those same years, I also led efforts to identify and correct omissions of America's religious history at prominent U.S. historic sites. These included the Washington Monument, where my investigation helped bring about changes that made the capstone replica's inscription *Laus Deo*—"Praise be to God"—visible and explained again, along with investigations involving Independence Hall, Jamestown, Monticello, and the U.S. Supreme Court. The purpose was to help visitors from across America and around the world encounter a fuller, more accurate account of the history before them. That work reinforced a principle that also guides this series: we should examine the evidence carefully and allow it to challenge an incomplete picture, including our own. (CrossFireUSA, [U.S. God Omissions—Research, Photographs, Correspondence, and Reports](#).)

Over the years, questions I once asked for myself became questions I heard from people in churches, hospital rooms, on battlefields, counseling conversations, seminars, and ordinary life. Some came as arguments; others came through tears. That taught me to recognize that an objection can carry grief, betrayal, fear, or disappointment as well as reasoning. A sound answer should address the argument without overlooking the person asking it.

That is why CrossFireUSA is launching this brand-new series, ***Christianity in the Crosshairs: Answering the 10 Objections Skeptics Raise Most Often***, followed by a bonus investigation into whether aliens could have seeded life on Earth. “Crosshairs” describes the scrutiny directed at Christianity’s claims, its Scriptures, its history, and its followers; it does not make the questioner an enemy. “Answering” means we will take responsibility for explaining what we believe and why. The subtitle identifies ten recurring, consequential objections—not a claim that a single survey has established their exact frequency or ranked them in this order.

Make Sure the Next Ten Tuesdays Reach You

Over the next ten weeks, we will examine these objections one at a time. Busy weeks can make it easy to miss an installment, so I encourage you to subscribe now and have each Tactical Tuesday delivered directly to your inbox. You can read it when you have time, return to the references, and share it with someone asking the same question. [Subscribe FREE to Tactical Tuesdays and the CrossFire Courier here](#); you can unsubscribe at any time.



The Generational Evidence: These Questions Are Already Here

The changing religious landscape gives this investigation urgency. Pew Research Center’s 2023–24 Religious Landscape Study, released in 2025, found that **62 percent of American adults** identified as Christian, compared with 78 percent in 2007. The religiously unaffiliated rose from 16 percent to 29 percent during that period. This category includes atheists, agnostics, and people who describe their religion as “nothing in particular”; it should never be treated as though everyone in it rejects God. (Pew Research Center, [Religious Identity in the United States](#).)

The generational differences are especially revealing. Pew’s December 2025 analysis found that **56 percent of adults ages 18–24** identified with a religion in the 2023–24 study, compared with 63 percent of that age group in 2014 and 74 percent in 2007. These figures measure affiliation with any religion, not Christianity alone. Pew also found recent national stability in religious measures, so the evidence does not justify declaring either an uninterrupted collapse or a nationwide youth revival. What it does show is that today’s young adults enter adulthood in a substantially less religious environment than their predecessors did. (Pew Research Center, [Religion Holds Steady in America](#).)

There is another distinction these numbers cannot capture: **identifying as Christian is not the same as understanding Christianity**. Dr. Christian Smith (b. 1960), a Harvard-trained sociologist, Notre Dame professor emeritus, and principal investigator of the National Study of Youth and Religion, documented this gap in the research behind *Soul Searching* (2005). Describing the outlook of many teenagers, he observed, “**For many teens, God is something like a combination divine butler and cosmic therapist.**” Smith called this outlook *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*: in plain language, religion reduced largely to being nice, feeling happy, and calling upon a generally distant God when help is needed. His findings suggest that young people can retain religious labels while possessing a thin understanding of the beliefs those labels traditionally represent—a problem of formation as well as affiliation. These earlier findings do not establish that every young Christian today is uninformed, but they expose an important weakness: a profession of belief tells us little, by itself, about whether someone understands Christ’s identity, grace, repentance, the Resurrection, or the reasons for believing Christianity is true. Alongside the decline in Christian identification, we must therefore ask how deeply the faith is being understood and passed on; otherwise, familiar Christian language may conceal beliefs that bear little resemblance to historic Christianity. (University of Notre Dame, [A Match Made in Heaven—Christian Smith on Teenage Faith](#); [Christian Smith: Faculty Profile](#).)

The questions themselves are measurable, too. A Barna study conducted with Christ In Youth among **1,500 American teenagers ages 13–18** in February 2026 found that 72 percent felt at least some pressure to determine what is true or worth believing, 69 percent to determine right and wrong, and 66 percent to answer why they are here. Fifty-six percent felt pressure to answer whether God is real, and 57 percent whether God loves them. Those findings measure the pressure to resolve questions, not the percentage who disbelieve; nevertheless, they show that matters of truth, morality, purpose, and God are already occupying young minds. (Barna Group, [New Research: The Big Questions on Teens’ Minds Today](#).)

This concern did not begin with the youngest generation. In research conducted from 2007 to 2011, Barna examined **18–29-year-olds** who had been active in a Christian church during their teenage years. **Thirty-six percent reported that being unable to ask their most pressing life questions in church described their experience, and 23 percent reported significant intellectual doubts about their faith.** The same research identified tensions involving science, sexuality, and Christianity’s exclusive claims—subjects still central to skeptical discussions today. These are older findings, but they reveal that the difficulty has persisted across successive groups of young adults. (Barna Group, [Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church](#).)

Nor are older adults immune. Pew’s 2024 report on religiously unaffiliated Americans found that 60 percent regarded questioning religious teachings as an extremely or very important reason for being nonreligious; **47 percent cited dislike of religious organizations, and 30 percent cited bad experiences with religious people.** Respondents could identify several reasons, so those percentages

should not be added together. They nevertheless establish something churches must face: questions about truth and concerns about Christian conduct both contribute to religious disengagement. (Pew Research Center, [Why Are “Nones” Nonreligious?.](#))



When Questions Go Unanswered, Other Voices Answer Them

An unanswered question does not disappear because a church avoids it. Someone who receives only “You just need more faith” may reasonably wonder whether Christianity has reasons that can survive examination. A Christian who knows what the church teaches but cannot explain why may struggle to distinguish a serious objection from an impressive-sounding assertion. Meanwhile, friends, coworkers, and family members may encounter Christian conclusions without ever hearing the reasoning behind them.

These surveys do not prove that insufficient apologetics causes every departure from Christianity. People leave, remain, return, or convert for many interacting reasons, including relationships, intellectual convictions, institutional experiences, and changes in their lives. But the reported inability to ask questions exposes a preventable weakness. When Christians fail to engage objections, they leave both their own people and the wider public with fewer opportunities to hear an informed Christian response.

The cost extends beyond attendance. It can weaken spiritual maturity when believers learn to conceal uncertainty rather than work through it, and it can weaken public witness when Christians substitute anger for explanation. It also makes correction more difficult: churches that cannot hear criticism may fail to recognize real wrongdoing. A credible Christian response must be able to defend a true claim, acknowledge an unresolved difficulty, and admit a genuine failure.

Apologetics is the traditional name for explaining and defending the faith with reasons. The word does not mean apologizing for being Christian; it refers to making a reasoned defense. At its best, it brings careful thought together with patient listening and an honest life. An argument about God’s goodness becomes more credible when the Christian presenting it also cares for the suffering person asking the question. I’ve said for decades, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” It’s still true.



A Crisis of Confidence—and an Opportunity to Give Serious Answers

Let’s be honest: too many Christians enter difficult cultural conversations without the preparation those conversations require. Some know what they believe but struggle to explain why; others withdraw because they fear being asked something they cannot answer. The research discussed above gives substance to that concern, particularly when young adults report that their deepest questions could not be asked in church. The biblical call to explain our hope and contend for the faith makes preparation a responsibility we should take seriously. ([1 Peter 3:15–16](#); [Jude 1:3](#).)

There is also an opportunity here. Skeptics and seekers are asking whether Christian claims describe reality, whether biblical events belong to history, and whether faith can survive moral scrutiny. A thoughtful response requires more than confidence in our own conclusions: it requires examining sources, understanding objections, and explaining the evidence clearly. These weekly investigations are my effort to do that work and make it accessible to people who cannot spend their own weeks sorting through books, scholarly debates, and competing online claims.

I personally select and write these Tactical Tuesday subjects because they address questions I have investigated, questions readers bring to me, and challenges that deserve a careful Christian response. My goal is to help you understand the evidence, recognize the limits of an argument, and discuss your convictions with informed confidence. For skeptics, that means a case you can examine rather than an instruction to accept my authority. For Christians, it means growing in understanding while learning to answer with the gentleness and respect Scripture requires.



I Was Listening Before Skepticism Became a Podcast

My interest in outspoken skeptics did not begin with YouTube. First, my family and friends were packed with them. Second, back in the 1980s, I was going to graduate school in Southern California when I enjoyed listening to Tom Leykis (b. 1956), the radio broadcaster and outspoken atheist whose confrontational style included challenges to religious belief. I remember listening as he went after Christians and their answers on the air; he loved to “blow them up” with audio bomb explosions. Sometimes those encounters exposed a weak response; sometimes the larger question required far more examination than a radio exchange could provide. Either way, I found the discussions engaging, and I did not consider a question unworthy of attention simply because an atheist was asking it.

I eventually did more than listen. While I was in the midst of finishing my graduate degree, I debated Leykis myself, and I came away believing I had “won” that exchange by making the stronger case and not being “blown up”—I still have that debate (on cassette!) and will one day broadcast it. The experience reinforced why preparation matters: Christians should be able to explain their convictions when challenged, and the person hearing the exchange deserves reasons to evaluate.

That memory helps explain why I take today’s skeptical conversations seriously. The medium has changed, but the need to distinguish a forceful presentation from a well-supported argument remains. Christians should be able to hear a challenge without panicking, consider what it gets right, and identify where its reasoning needs examination. A confident Christian response should welcome that work.



From New Atheist Books to the Podcast in Your Pocket

The modern skeptical conversation has recognizable voices, but they do not all speak alike. The expression **New Atheism** refers to the prominent early twenty-first-century movement that treated religion as something to challenge publicly through arguments about evidence, science, morality, and social harm. It does not simply mean any recently emerging atheist. Its familiar figures helped popularize the contention that religion is not merely mistaken but dangerous. (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [New Atheists](#).)

Dr. Richard Dawkins (b. 1941), an evolutionary biologist and former Oxford University professor of the public understanding of science, brought scientific prestige and accessible writing to the New Atheist movement. His book *The God Delusion* helped popularize the accusation that belief in God is intellectually unjustified. His influence highlights a challenge Christians must address carefully: whether their beliefs can withstand scrutiny involving evidence, science, and reason.

Christopher Hitchens (1949–2011), a journalist, essayist, public debater, and author of *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, pressed a related but distinct accusation: religion is morally harmful. His memorable rhetoric and confrontational debates challenged religious claims through questions about suffering, persecution, freedom, and abuses committed in God's name. Answering that challenge requires Christians to examine both their teachings and their historical record honestly, acknowledging wrongdoing while investigating whether the indictment fairly represents Christianity.

Dr. Sam Harris (b. 1967), an author with a Stanford philosophy degree and a UCLA doctorate in neuroscience, continues the conversation through his *Making Sense* podcast and other work. His subjects include religion, moral philosophy, violence, consciousness, and meditation. His appeal is instructive: skeptical audiences may be looking for ethics, inner life, and practical wisdom as well as

arguments against belief. Christians need to understand those aspirations rather than assume that rejecting religion means rejecting every spiritual or moral question. (Sam Harris, [About Sam Harris](#).)

Seth Andrews (b. 1968), a former Christian broadcaster, author, and host of *The Thinking Atheist*, offers another kind of connection: a recognizable story of leaving faith and an online community for people examining similar questions.

Among younger voices, **Alex O'Connor (b. 1999)**, an Oxford philosophy and theology graduate, writer, and host of *Within Reason*, has built a substantial audience through discussions of religion, ethics, and biblical scholarship. His website describes him as an agnostic and lists more than 1.5 million YouTube subscribers. His long conversations with both critics and defenders of religion demonstrate that serious questions can attract attention without being reduced to a shouting match. An undergraduate degree should not be confused with doctoral expertise, but neither should the absence of a doctorate become an excuse to ignore an argument.

It is also important to recognize that today's skeptical conversation includes more uncertainty and openness than the familiar image of an atheist ridiculing religion might suggest. Alex O'Connor is a useful example: his website describes him as an agnostic, and he has discussed reconsidering some of his earlier judgments about Christianity and his relationship with New Atheism. That does not mean he has become a Christian, but it demonstrates that serious disagreement can coexist with intellectual humility and a willingness to hear stronger arguments. Dr. Paul Draper (b. 1957), a Purdue University professor of philosophy specializing in philosophy of religion, explains that atheism and agnosticism have several meanings; in one common usage, someone can lack belief in God while also declining to claim knowledge that God does not exist. In ordinary language, **"I am not persuaded" need not mean "I know Christianity is false."** We should therefore distinguish criticism of Christianity from contempt for it, and openness to reconsideration from an actual profession of faith. For some people, questioning earlier certainties does eventually lead toward religious belief: Ayaan Hirsi Ali, previously associated with New Atheism, publicly announced her identification as Christian in 2023. Others remain unconvinced, and neither outcome should be presumed simply because a conversation becomes more respectful. The opportunity for Christians is to meet that openness with substantive answers, patient listening, and the freedom to examine the evidence—without treating every thoughtful skeptic as a convert-in-waiting. (Justin Brierley, [Alex O'Connor: Losing Faith in New Atheism](#); Paul Draper, [Atheism and Agnosticism](#); Ayaan Hirsi Ali, [Why I Am Now a Christian](#).)

These platforms offer several plausible reasons for their appeal: accessible explanations, extended conversations, recognizable personal experiences, and opportunities to belong. That is an interpretation of their formats and public work, not a survey proving why every listener tunes in. Some listeners are persuaded skeptics; others are curious believers or people trying to decide what they think. Listening to a skeptical podcast does not, by itself, establish someone's worldview.

The broader medium's reach is undeniable. Edison Research's *Infinite Dial 2026* reported that 58 percent of Americans ages twelve and older had listened to or watched a podcast in the preceding month, and 45 percent in the preceding week. Those figures describe all podcasts, not atheist programming. They show why religious discussion now takes place far beyond bookshelves, classrooms, and Sunday services: a sustained conversation about God can accompany someone through an ordinary week. (Edison Research, [The Infinite Dial 2026](#).)



Yes, Joe Rogan Belongs in This Conversation

Joe Rogan (b. 1967), a comedian, UFC commentator, and host of *The Joe Rogan Experience*, is someone I enjoyed watching long before his podcast became a major platform. I used to watch him hosting *Fear Factor*, whose original run with Rogan aired from 2001 to 2006. I still like Rogan, even when I disagree with a conclusion or want to examine something said on his program more carefully. Enjoying an interviewer does not require accepting every claim made across his microphone. (TV Guide, [Joe Rogan to Return as Fear Factor Host](#).)

His relevance here is also measurable. Edison Research ranked *The Joe Rogan Experience* first among U.S. podcasts by reach among weekly podcast consumers ages thirteen and older in the second quarter of 2025. That ranking establishes audience reach, not theological expertise. It does help explain why Christians should pay attention when religious questions arise there: those discussions can reach people who would never attend a formal apologetics debate. (Edison Research, [The Top 50 Podcasts in the U.S. for Q2 2025](#).)

Rogan has brought a striking range of voices into these conversations, including **Wesley Huff**, defending Christianity and discussing biblical manuscripts; **Stephen Meyer**, presenting arguments for an intelligent Creator; **Jordan Peterson**, exploring Scripture, meaning, and responsibility; **Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris**, challenging religious belief from atheistic perspectives; and **Dan McClellan**, examining the Bible from his own Mormon background.

We should describe Rogan fairly as a wide-ranging interviewer rather than simply enlist him under the New Atheist label—he’s actually more of a seeking agnostic, at least to me. He’s fair and open-minded, but just because an “expert” in something in the radio (or YouTube) doesn’t make them right. A host’s question, a guest’s assertion, and a settled conclusion are three different things.

Throughout this new series I'm starting, *Christianity in the Crosshairs: Answering the 10 Objections Skeptics Raise Most Often*, when a podcast raises a relevant challenge, we will examine the actual claim, its context, and the evidence behind it. The same standard will apply whether the speaker is a skeptic, a scholar, a pastor, or a Christian celebrity.

Popularity can give an argument visibility; it cannot establish its truth. Academic credentials can establish relevant training; they cannot settle every question a credentialed person discusses. Christians should therefore avoid both reflexive dismissal and uncritical admiration. We can respect a speaker, understand an audience's interest, and still ask whether the conclusion follows from the evidence.



Jordan Peterson and the Hunger for Serious Answers

Dr. Jordan B. Peterson (b. 1962), a Canadian psychologist, McGill-trained Ph.D., and professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Toronto who previously taught at Harvard, belongs in this discussion too. His book *We Who Wrestle with God*, published in November 2024, examines biblical accounts of rebellion, sacrifice, suffering, and responsibility through psychological and cultural interpretation. His work shows that sustained discussion of Scripture and the deepest questions of human life can find an audience far beyond a local congregation. ([Jordan B. Peterson: Author Biography](#))

Peterson's official biography reports more than 150 million podcast downloads—a cumulative measure, not 150 million individual listeners. His reach exceeds what most individual pastors could expect through a local pulpit, but those figures do not reveal how many listeners are Christian, skeptical, or undecided. What his public work does demonstrate is an appetite for extended discussions of meaning, suffering, conscience, and the Bible. It is reasonable to see his willingness to

engage such questions as one element of his appeal, without pretending that a single explanation accounts for his entire audience. (Jordan Peterson, [About.](#))

There is a lesson here for Christians. People do not necessarily lose interest when a discussion becomes demanding; they may welcome depth when it addresses something they actually need to understand. We should bring that seriousness to our own explanations while examining whether a psychological interpretation of a biblical story adequately accounts for its historical and theological claims. Finding wisdom in the story of Jesus and believing that Jesus is the risen Son of God are related but distinct conclusions, and this series will keep that distinction clear.



The Bible Calls Christians to Give Answers—and Governs How We Give Them

For readers who do not accept the Bible's authority, the following passages explain why Christians should undertake this work; citing them does not automatically settle the skeptical objections. For Christians, however, the obligation is direct. First Peter calls believers to be prepared to give a reason for their hope, and requires gentleness and respect in doing so. Readiness and character belong together: a correct answer delivered contemptuously can contradict the hope it claims to explain. ([1 Peter 3:15–16.](#))

Jesus commands love for God with the mind as well as the heart, soul, and strength. Acts portrays Paul reasoning in the synagogue and marketplace, engaging philosophers in Athens, and addressing the beliefs of his hearers rather than merely demanding that they adopt his vocabulary. The Bereans are commended for examining the Scriptures to test what they were being taught. Together, these passages present inquiry, explanation, and examination as legitimate parts of faithful belief. ([Mark 12:30](#); [Acts 17:2–4, 11, 16–34.](#))

The New Testament also expects growth in understanding. Ephesians describes Christian maturity as protection against being carried along by changing teachings, while Colossians calls for wise conduct toward outsiders and speech suited to answering each person. This means that preparation is more than memorizing a universal comeback. It includes recognizing what someone is actually asking and explaining the faith in language that person can understand. ([Ephesians 4:11–15](#); [Colossians 4:5–6](#).)

Finally, Scripture rules out the idea that defending Christianity excuses quarrelsomeness or the concealment of wrongdoing. The Lord’s servant is instructed to teach patiently and correct gently; Christians are told to expose works of darkness. An investigation of church abuse must therefore include truthfulness, accountability, and concern for those harmed. Christian faithfulness cannot mean protecting an institution’s reputation at the expense of the people it was supposed to serve. ([2 Timothy 2:24–26](#); [Ephesians 5:11](#).)



What You Can Expect from These Investigations

CrossFireUSA has already examined God and science, evolution, comparative religions, Jesus alongside other religious leaders, biblical reliability, Christ’s identity, and the Resurrection. Those investigations provide foundations for this series. Here we move into the questions that remain even after someone understands the positive case: Is this God good? Are His judgments just? Are biblical commands defensible? Does Christianity’s history discredit its claims?

We will examine strong versions of objections, consult relevant scholars, and distinguish what a source establishes from what someone infers from it. We will also distinguish Christian teachings from disputed interpretations and from conduct that violates those teachings. That distinction must be demonstrated in each case, not used as a convenient escape whenever history becomes uncomfortable. Where Christians disagree, readers deserve to know what the disagreement is and why it matters.

Dr. John Lennox (b. 1943), Oxford University emeritus professor of mathematics and a Christian author who engages questions of science, philosophy, and religion, illustrates the kind of informed engagement this work values. Yet a distinguished Christian name will not substitute for an argument any more than a distinguished skeptical name will. Sources will appear within the discussion, with linked titles, and scholars' relevant credentials will be identified so readers can evaluate both the reasoning and its foundation. (John Lennox, [About John Lennox](#).)

Technical terms will be explained when they enter the investigation. **Divine hiddenness**, for example, concerns God's apparent absence or the apparent lack of sufficiently clear evidence of His presence. **Naturalism**, in the philosophical sense relevant here, holds that reality is exhausted by the natural order, without a supernatural God. An **objective** moral claim asserts something more than personal preference—for example, that abusing a child is wrong even when a society approves it. Explaining a term opens the discussion; it does not decide the argument in advance.

The series will speak directly to skeptics while giving Christians examples of how serious questions can be handled. You will not need a seminary degree to follow it. You will need a willingness to examine evidence, distinguish claims, and reconsider conclusions when warranted. Each installment will address one central challenge while showing how it connects to the larger question of whether Christianity is true and worthy of trust.



The Ten Questions We Will Confront

1. If God Is Good, Why Is There So Much Evil and Innocent Suffering?

The Question: *“If God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and wholly good, why does He permit horrific evil, natural disasters, disease, seemingly pointless suffering, and especially the suffering of innocent children?”*

Why It Leads: This question reaches both the mind and the heart. We will distinguish moral evil—wrongdoing by responsible agents—from natural suffering, such as disease and earthquakes, while

examining freedom, divine intervention, and suffering whose purpose we cannot see. The investigation must take the strongest argument seriously without pretending that an explanation removes grief.

2. If God Exists, Why Doesn't He Make Himself Obvious?

The Question: *"If God exists and desires to be known, why does He remain so apparently hidden? Why doesn't He make His existence unmistakably clear?"*

Why It's Here: The challenge concerns what we should expect from a God who desires relationship with human beings. We will investigate evidence, revelation, and "nonresistant nonbelief"—unbelief that does not arise from resisting a relationship with God. This is a substantial philosophical objection, and it deserves more than assuming that everyone who doubts secretly refuses to believe. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [Hiddenness of God](#).)

3. How Can Jesus Be the Only Way?

The Question: *"How can Christianity claim that Jesus is the only way to God? What happens to sincere people of other religions—and to those who never had a meaningful opportunity to hear the Gospel?"*

Why It's Here: This investigation brings together truth, salvation, and fairness. We will distinguish the claim that salvation comes through Christ from questions about how God judges people with different opportunities to know Him. We will also examine what Scripture says, where Christian interpretations differ, and where confidence would exceed what the evidence warrants.

4. How Can a Loving God Send Anyone to Hell?

The Question: *"How can an infinitely loving and just God permit eternal punishment for sins committed during a finite human lifetime?"*

Why It's Here: Hell raises questions about proportionality, responsibility, mercy, and the seriousness of evil. We will examine Jesus' teaching, biblical descriptions of judgment, degrees of accountability, and Christian disagreements about final punishment's nature and duration. Familiar imagery and inherited assumptions will be tested against the texts themselves.

5. Is the God of the Old Testament Morally Indefensible?

The Question: *"How can Christians call the Bible morally authoritative when the Old Testament contains Canaanite warfare, slavery or servitude, severe legal penalties, patriarchal structures, and commands that appear morally indefensible today?"*

Why It's Here: These passages challenge God's character as well as biblical interpretation. We will investigate ancient law, warfare, slavery, women's status, and the difference between recording an action and commanding it. Historical distinctions matter, but comparison with later slavery cannot by itself excuse coercion or make every biblical institution benign.

6. Is Christian Sexual Morality Harmful, Repressive, and Outdated?

The Question: *“Why should modern people accept Christianity’s teachings about sex, marriage, homosexuality, gender, and the roles of men and women when critics argue that those teachings are restrictive, discriminatory, outdated, or actually harmful?”*

Why It’s Here: This dispute concerns moral authority, human identity, freedom, and well-being. We will investigate biblical teaching, the reasoning behind Christian sexual ethics, differing interpretations, and specific claims of harm. We will also distinguish moral disagreement from mistreatment while recognizing that conduct, coercion, and discrimination require examination beyond someone’s assertion of good intentions.

7. Has Religion—and Christianity in Particular—Done More Harm Than Good?

The Question: *“Is religion inherently a force for tribalism, ignorance, oppression, and war? And when Christianity’s historical record is honestly examined, has it ultimately done more harm than good?”*

Why It’s Here: We will examine persecution, religious warfare, antisemitism, slavery, and colonial abuses alongside Christian contributions to education, care, reform, and human dignity. The work requires examining causes rather than merely assembling competing lists. We must ask how teachings, institutions, political power, and human choices interacted in the actual historical record.

8. Why Trust Christianity When Christians Can Be So Hypocritical?

The Question: *“Why should anyone trust Christianity’s message of moral and spiritual transformation when churches and Christian leaders have sometimes been guilty of hypocrisy, greed, sexual abuse, corruption, manipulation, and institutional cover-ups?”*

Why It’s Here: This investigation focuses on the credibility of Christian witnesses and institutions, including failures experienced personally. The conduct of Christians does not automatically settle Christianity’s truth claims, but it can seriously challenge claims about transformation and institutional trustworthiness. We will examine that challenge while insisting that abuse requires accountability, not simply an apologetic explanation.

9. Was Jesus Borrowed, Invented, or Reinvented?

The Question: *“Was the story of Jesus borrowed from pagan religions, and was Jesus gradually transformed from an ordinary Jewish teacher into the divine Son of God by later Christians, church councils, or Roman political interests?”*

Why It’s Here: We will distinguish claims that Jesus never existed from claims of pagan borrowing or later theological inflation. Each requires its own evidence: dates, texts, genuine parallels, Jewish context, early Christian beliefs, and the decisions of church councils. The question is whether these proposed reconstructions fit the surviving evidence better than the Christian account.

10. Do We Really Need God?

The Question: *“Why do we need God at all? Can’t atheists and agnostics be moral, find meaning and purpose, love others, defend human rights, and live fulfilling lives without Christianity?”*

Why It’s Here: The answer to whether nonbelievers can live morally and meaningfully is yes. The deeper investigation concerns what ultimately grounds moral obligations, human worth, rights, purpose, and hope, and whether different worldviews adequately explain them. We will examine serious secular accounts rather than assume that atheism necessarily means nihilism—the belief that life lacks ultimate meaning or value—or that every skeptic embraces naturalism.



BONUS Investigation: Did Aliens Seed Life on Earth—and Would That Eliminate the Need for God?

The Question: *“Could an extraterrestrial civilization have deliberately seeded life on Earth—and, if so, would that explain our ultimate origins or simply move the question to another planet?”*

Why It’s Here: Could the alien-seeding idea be more than science fiction? **Dr. Francis Crick (1916–2004)**, the Nobel Prize-winning co-discoverer of DNA’s double-helical structure, and **Dr. Leslie Orgel (1927–2007)**, a chemist and origin-of-life researcher, explored deliberate extraterrestrial seeding in a 1973 scientific paper. Even Richard Dawkins entertained that hypothetical possibility during his interview in Ben Stein’s *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (2008), although he later clarified that he did not believe it had occurred. We will investigate what they actually proposed, whether evidence supports it, and whether alien seeding explains life’s ultimate origin—or merely moves the question elsewhere. (Crick and Orgel, [Directed Panspermia](#); Point of Inquiry, [Richard Dawkins on His Expelled Interview](#).)



An Invitation to Examine Christianity at Its Most Difficult Points

The order takes us from suffering and God's apparent silence to salvation and judgment, then into biblical morality, sexuality, historical harm, and institutional failure. It next examines skeptical reconstructions of Jesus and ends by asking what follows when God is removed from the account of human life. Christianity will face scrutiny throughout; the alternatives will face scrutiny as well. Neither should receive a free pass simply because a reader already prefers it.

If you are a skeptic, you are invited to bring your strongest questions, examine the references, and judge whether the answers actually address the objections. If you are a Christian, you are invited to understand your faith more deeply and listen more carefully to those who question it. If you have been hurt by Christians, this series will not require you to call that harm good or treat institutional loyalty as the measure of truth.

My conviction is that Christianity can withstand serious examination, but conviction does not relieve me of the responsibility to make the case. We will begin where explanations often become hardest and most personal: **If God is good, why is there so much evil and innocent suffering?** Join us for this new Tactical Tuesday series at CrossFireUSA.org, and invite someone whose questions deserve to be heard.

Subscribe Now—and Keep the Whole Series Within Reach

The next ten weeks will bring questions worth taking time to examine, even when your calendar is crowded. Subscribe now so each installment arrives in your inbox, ready whenever you can give it your attention. Your free subscription includes our faith-building Tactical Tuesday editions and

Saturday CrossFire Courier briefings. [Subscribe HERE for FREE to Tactical Tuesdays & the CrossFire Courier!](#) You can unsubscribe at any time.

If you are already subscribed, thank you—you will receive the series through the same list. If you are new, you are welcome whether you are a committed Christian, a skeptic, or someone still deciding what to believe. Invite a friend whose questions resemble your own, and examine the evidence together. We begin with one of the hardest questions human beings have ever asked: **If God is good, why is there so much evil and innocent suffering?**

About CrossFireUSA: A Growing Audience for Questions That Matter

Since our launch in May 2025, CrossFireUSA.org has welcomed more than 110,000 visitors, according to GoDaddy's website reporting. That reach is encouraging because it gives these investigations an opportunity to serve people well beyond those I could meet personally. The number does not tell us what every visitor believed or how each responded, though thousands have written to ask further questions. It does remind me of the responsibility to make the material accurate, understandable, and worthy of their time.

GoDaddy's website dashboard offered another encouraging observation: "Your daily site visitors are in the top 5% of Faith and Religion sites established within the past 3 years." That is a comparison of daily traffic among recently established sites in that category. I am grateful for the reach and for everyone who reads, tests, and shares this work.

