Introduction to Apologetics-Part V

Course modeled after Frank Turek and Norman Geisler's *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* curriculum, with additional materials from William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, Hugh Ross, Stephen Meyers, John Lennox, Douglas Groothuis, N.T. Wright, Ravi Zacharias, Andy Bannister, Paul Copan, and Rodney Stark.

Course Outline:

Can You Handle the Truth?

1. Truth about reality is knowable.✓
2. The opposite of true is false. ✓
3. It is true that the theistic God exists.
4. If God exists, then miracles are possible.
5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God.
6. The New Testament is historically reliable.
7. The New Testament says Jesus claimed to be God.
8. Jesus' claim to be God was miraculously confirmed by His fulfillment of prophecies, His sinless life and miraculous deeds, and His prediction and accomplishment of His resurrection.
9. Therefore, Jesus is God.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.
11. Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God.
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God (and anything opposed to it is false).

Everything in this 12-step argument is built on knowable truth. By this point, you should be able to discern self-defeating statements, establish that truth is knowable, explain that absolute truths do exist, the four basic questions every person needs to ask about their humanity, the basic cosmological arguments for the existence of God, and show that Intelligent Design is not unscientific. This class will complete the arguments for premise 3 of our 12-step argument as we will look at the Moral Argument.

The Moral Argument

The Moral Argument for God establishes that since humans operate with a duty to a moral law, there must be a moral law giver.

1._____

2._____

3._____

Expanding the argument

Ravi Zacharias presents a strong expanded argument that can be utilized as a response to a question dealing with God allowing suffering.

1. Ask the person the question if they believe the suffering is _____.
2. If they state that they believe it is _____, ask them how they can distinguish _____ from _____.
3. Since they are able to distinguish _____ from _____, then there must be some sort of _____ _____ that provides the guidance for such distinction.
4. And since there is guidance, there must be someone or something that has provided that guidance.

The primary refutation to number 4 above is that one does not need God in order to be good. Is that true?

Do you need God to be good?

I'm so glad you asked that question! Why? Because this might be the number one question that you as a Christian will be faced with in this country. If the person has been through college and has studied a bit of philosophy, they may present you with the **Euthyphro Dilemma**, which has its origins with Plato. It has been adapted to challenge the Christian theist and goes like this:

> Does God do something because it is good, or is it good because God does it?

What the challenger is hoping is that by presenting this to you, he'll trap you in a non-winnable dilemma. How?

1. The first part assumes that good exists _____ _____ _____.
2. The second part assumes that God _____ _____ ____ _____.

What are we to do? Fortunately, this dilemma for the Christian theist is a false dilemma. Why? Look at this exchange between Kevin Harris and William Lane Craig discussing a debate Dr. Craig had with Dr. Zachary Moore on the topic of morality:

What we want to say is that God's nature *is* The Good and that this simply determines what goodness is. Therefore, to say "why is God's nature good?" or "does it create the good or recognize the good?" is to fail to understand the alternative. It is sort of like asking, "Is The Good, good because it creates The Good or because it recognizes The Good?" Well, neither one – The Good is good because it is The Good. It defines what is The Good. It is the standard. It simply makes no sense to ask this further question.

Kevin Harris: What it brings up then is "What is a nature?" and "What is God's nature?"

Dr. Craig: Right. It tends to think of God's nature as some sort of a personal thing itself that can create or recognize things. By God's nature, what we mean are his essential attributes or properties. The whole concept here of the third alternative is that God's nature is definitive of what is good.
So the atheist, I think, would face exactly the same dilemma. I would ask him, how does he halt the infinite regress? What is his ultimate standard of goodness and then you can ask the same question of that – is it good because it creates The Good or because it recognizes The Good? Well, I'm sure he would say neither one – it just is the good, it is the ultimate standard. That is exactly what theists say about the nature of God.

Kevin Harris: You are looking for a proper stopping point. It is possible to have a stopping point rather than an infinite regress.

Dr. Craig: Sure. Unless you are some sort of a moral nihilist, which I don't think he is; he believes that there are objective values – right and wrong. So he as an atheist will face exactly the same question – what is your stopping point that is definitive of what is good and evil? It makes no sense to ask of that ultimate stopping point whether it creates The Good or recognizes The Good. Rather, it just *is* The Good.

Simply stated: God is "The Good" because He defines what good is. The Euthyphro Dilemma is suggesting that good is something abstract or arbitrary, which does not define what God necessarily is.

And since we are on the topic of ontology (what God is), let me show you the ontological argument for God:

Premise 1: It is possible that God exists.
Premise 2: If it is possible that God exists, then God exists in some possible worlds.
Premise 3: If God exists in some possible worlds, then God exists in all possible worlds.
Premise 4: If God exists in all possible worlds, then God exists in the actual world.
Premise 5: If God exists in the actual world, then God exists.
Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.

In order to wrap your brain around this argument, you must understand what defines God. And that would be that He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent, and maximally superior in all maximally beneficial attributes.

Okay! Enough of the mental exercises! Can a person be good without God?

"Despite not believing in God, and not believing in an afterlife where I might be rewarded or punished for my behaviour, I try to be a good person. That's the most any of us can do" (Alom Shaha).

Let's break down this typical atheistic belief. There are some weak points in this argument where a Christian can make inroads.

1. He states that he does not believe in God, but does not state that God

    _____.

2. Since he mentions reward and punishment for behavior, he must, then, believe in a

    _____.

3. Since he mentions that he tries to be a good person, he must, therefore, have a definition of

    _____.

"Only if ethics were something unspeakable by us, could law be unnatural, and therefore unchallengeable. As things now stand, everything is up for grabs.
Nevertheless:

> Napalming babies is bad.
> Starving the poor is wicked.
> Buying and selling each other is depraved.
> Those who stood up to and died resisting Hitler, Stalin, Amin, and Pol Pot—and General Custer
> > too—have earned salvation.
> Those who acquiesced deserve to be damned.
> There is in the world such a thing as evil.
> [All together now:] Sez who?
> > God help us" (Arthur Leff, former Yale University professor).

The popular arguments against needing God for goodness:

"One suggestion that atheists have made is that morality is a products of human society. Over time, a kind of shared morality emerges—we generally agree that people should not be allowed to rape and murder at will, for example—and thus our moral code gradually emerges" (Bannister, "Can We be Good Without God").

1. Just because a value is shared by society, it does not necessarily follow that the value is

    _____.

2. Even if every society agrees on a common value, it does not necessarily follow that the value is

    _____.

3. How can a moral code emerge if there is no moral code _____?

"Spotting the problem with trying to use society to determine morality and goodness, other atheists have leapt upon science as a way to solve their problem" (Bannister).

Here's how the argument for science goes:

- Questions about morality are nothing more than questions about happiness;
- Science can tell us how to make the greatest number of people happy;
- Therefore science can answer moral questions.

This is also known as utilitarianism: you must pick that action which will produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

1. If happiness is the qualifier, then whose happiness takes precedence? Who defines what happiness is? Can science do that?
2. Why should happiness be the qualifier? Why not wisdom, compassion, or bravery? Science cannot tell us why happiness should be the qualifier.
3. Science actually produces more ethical questions than it can possibly answer. If I invent a new chemical that can painlessly and instantly kill tens of thousands of people, how does science regulate its usage?

"Despite all the myriad difficulties that beset attempts to talk about goodness without God, morality is *everywhere*, we simply cannot escape it. We open our mouths and we make moral judgments *all the time*" (Bannister).

In order to find what goodness really entails, you must find the purpose to that which goodness is attached. For example, if I use my watch to hammer a nail and the watch breaks, does that make it a bad watch? No, because that is not the watch's purpose.

It is the same with human life. If atheism is true, then there is no purpose and, therefore, no goodness attached to it. In atheism, life is meaningless, aimless, and devoid of any purpose whatsoever.

So, what about Christianity?

"Every other attempt at morality and ethics is performance-based: do *this*, because of what you might *achieve* (your genes passed on; society's approval; happiness). Christianity, by contrast, is a *response*" (Bannister).

To what, or whom, is the Christian responding?

Let's put it ALL together now (remember: no Bible, yet)!

You and a friend are hiking in Shenandoah National Park along the Lewis Falls trail. You come to a spot where there is a gap in the trees and a view of the valley below is afforded both of you. You notice your friend, a supposedly ardent atheist, gazing in wonder at the view. You seize the opportunity to wield your newly honed apologetic skills:

You: What do you think?

They: It is spectacular! Look how beautiful the valley is and how the distant mountains rise against the horizon.

You: (present something teleological)

They: I couldn't disagree more. It's all so beautiful, but you can't prove some god fashioned all of this. Besides, science and geology has shown how the Appalachian Mountains were formed: some of it was by continental drift, some by tectonic plate thrust, and some were even by lava flow.

You: (present something to refute the God vs. science claim)

They: I thought you Christians all believed that this all just instantaneously appeared. Interesting, but it still doesn't prove that your god did this.

You: (present something cosmological)

They: I've always been stymied by the initial causality of the universe. I still think you are shoving God into where a gap where science hasn't yet finalized a solution. Interesting argument, though. But, we can both agree that this is a beautiful view, yes?

You: (present something along the lines of the moral argument, but substituting "beautiful" for "good")

They: Well, I certainly don't need God to know that this is beautiful.

You: (move into the moral argument)

They: Well, just like I probably learned that this and other imagery like this are beautiful from centuries of knowledge being passed down, I think society has gotten better and better as we have learned our mistakes from our past.

You: (counter the argument)