

A Parent's Guide to

A DOUBTING TEEN

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Doubts lead to great conversations.

Whether we like it or not, we live in an increasingly post-Christian culture that no longer accepts the basic tenets of Christianity as universal truth. The rise of religious pluralism, relativism, and agnostic attitudes toward faith are changing the cultural landscape. Though frustrating, these shifts provide fresh opportunities to engage our children with both the evidence for and the heart of Christianity.

Maybe your teens have encountered people who have challenged their faith, or maybe they are the ones asking tough questions about Christianity. This is nothing new—even Paul responded to questions about God’s existence! He taught that the problem is not a lack of evidence, but rather the suppression of the evidence ([Romans 1:18-20](#)). This guide will give brief overviews of why Christianity is true, why the Bible is reliable, and why Jesus Christ really was who He claimed to be.

Because each piece is more nuanced than can be discussed in this Guide, we also offer many resources from experts for further study. By working through these questions and following the links with your teens, they will better understand the evidence behind their faith. May this Guide serve as the first step in your family’s journey of discovering why you believe what you believe and achieving a more robust understanding of the depths of God’s infinite love for us.

Should I be worried my teen has doubts?

Despite what it may feel like—“I’ve done something wrong!” “Clearly his faith isn’t strong enough!” “She’s just going to walk away from her faith!”—when a teen or pre-teen starts asking real questions about faith, God, Christianity, and other belief systems, it’s nothing to panic about. In fact, it’s not only normal, but a very healthy and developmentally appropriate part of spiritual growth. How many of us have echoed the words from Mark’s gospel: “I do believe; [help me overcome my unbelief!](#)” Theologian [Os Guinness once wrote](#), “If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid of doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger.”

If your teen is struggling with questions or doubts, he/she is joining a great cloud of witnesses who've been on the same journey. From [John the Baptist](#), "[Doubting Thomas](#)," Martin Luther, [C. S. Lewis](#), and Mother Teresa, Christianity is filled with individuals who intellectually and spiritually struggled to believe, but through their authentic struggle they came to a place of deep trust and reliance upon God. "Doubt can very often [coexist with faith](#). The fact that a person has doubts doesn't mean they have no faith; it may mean that their faith is alive, that it is struggling, that it is growing."

However, in some (not all) circles of Christianity, this rich history of doubting well was recently replaced by a strict adherence to "blind faith," ignoring evidence rather than following it, and fearing questions rather than using them to make one's faith stronger. Young Christians were taught to do as they were told, rather than to think for themselves.

The results have been disastrous, with many millennials and Gen Zers choosing to walk away from a belief system that seemed misogynistic, oppressive, illogical, and downright boring. **But it absolutely doesn't have to be that way!** We believe, like so many generations of Christians before us, that we have nothing to fear from questions, doubts, and scrutiny because the evidence points solidly and firmly to Christ as Risen Savior. We also believe that following and becoming more like Him is the only path to true fulfillment, flourishing, and life.

So rather than allowing our teens' curiosity and/or skepticism to scare us, let's breathe, relax, and view this as an opportunity to bring them into the rich history of skeptics who found that Christ was who they'd been looking for all along and to bring them into deep, lifelong flourishing. After all, if God is who He says He is, then no question, doubt, or other barrier to belief is too big for Him!

Does truth exist?

Our postmodern culture preaches "tolerance" (i.e. keeping one's beliefs to oneself and not judging others) as the highest virtue. In his book *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, Lesslie Newbigin writes, "In a pluralistic society such as ours, any confident statement of ultimate belief, any claim to announce the truth about God and his purpose for the world, is liable to be dismissed as ignorant, arrogant, or dogmatic." This idea of

tolerance stems from an attempt to be inclusive and show love and grace, but what results is that anything deemed as “intolerant” (i.e. claiming to know truth or saying that one belief system is correct while another is incorrect) is labeled as hate speech. Teens often hear phrases like, “What’s true for you may not be true for me,” “That’s your truth,” or “There is no truth, only perspective.” Thus, the entire basis for any belief system comes into question, making it hard for a person to commit to anything that claims to know such things as right and wrong.

Ironically, this postmodern belief self-destructs when applied to itself. To say, “There is no truth,” is itself a truth claim. Whenever someone makes a claim like this, simply ask, “Is that true?” By applying the claim to itself, phrases like these are easily shown to be self-defeating and absurd, therefore rendering the postmodern understanding of “tolerance” self-defeating as well.

Instead, **real tolerance is agreeing that people have the right to believe whatever they want while understanding that not everything we believe is right.** As Christians, we acknowledge that there is truth and that truth is good. The problem with holding tolerance and truth in tension is that to embrace truth, you have to be intolerant of some ideas. You cannot always be all-inclusive. We Christians can and should help others see the flaw in this meaning of tolerance while treating people with gentleness and respect ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). We must keep in mind that a person making an absurd claim is not himself absurd! The key is to be inclusive (tolerant) of people, but exclusive (intolerant) of bad/false ideas.

Question to consider: Ask your teens if they have ever heard anyone make a self-defeating statement. How would they respond to such a claim?

Name to know: J.P. Moreland (Video: “[Self-Refuting Claims Explained](#)”)

Website: [SeanMcDowell.org](#) (especially “[10 Self-Refuting Statements You Must Know](#)”)

Book: [Truth Decay](#) by Douglas Groothuis

What if a teenager doesn’t care if God exists?

“Meaningless, Meaningless!” says the Teacher, “everything is meaningless!” Many will

recognize this as the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes, but how many have seriously considered what the Teacher is trying to convey? The Teacher is describing how a life without God would have no purpose. As he searches for purpose in work, pleasure, and wisdom, he ultimately concludes that “everything under the sun” is meaningless, has no purpose, and cannot satisfy our need for purpose. Yet, he says in the third chapter that there is a time and place for everything, and we all have an intuition that things ought to be a certain way. This intuition causes us to try and find our purpose, ultimately pointing us to the One who gives purpose to our existence: God.

The Teacher says, “God has made everything beautiful in its time, and He has set eternity in the hearts of men... God has done this so that in His presence men may fear him.” Modern psychology confirms this, as Oliver Sacks writes in his book *Awakenings*, “We all have this intuitive knowing that we were at one time at ease and at peace in the world. . . .We spend our entire lives trying to get back this innocent, primal, happy state.” Both modern psychology and Scripture confirm that everyone has a yearning for a spiritual reality and to find their unique place in that reality.

But does desire point to God? It can, when understood correctly. Every natural desire we have corresponds to some real fulfillment of that desire. We experience hunger, so we eat. We wish for rest, so we sleep. There also exists a deep longing which nothing in this world can satisfy; you might call it a spiritual desire. The best explanation is that we were made for a spiritual reality that we have yet to experience. Since the dawn of time, every generation has testified to the idea that there must be something more to life than just survival, as each culture has tried in its own way (through things like science or religion) to satisfy their spiritual hunger. The question is not if we are spiritual creatures; the question is what kind of spiritual creatures we will commit to be. Augustine famously wrote in *Confessions*, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.”

Question to consider: How different would your life be without God?

Name to Know: C.S. Lewis (Video: “[Man or Rabbit](#)”)

Websites: Crossexamined.org (especially “[Still Haven’t Found What You Are Looking For? C.S. Lewis, Bono, and the Argument from Desire](#)”); AndrewScotProctor.com (“[Hope by C.S. Lewis](#)”)

Books: [The God Question: An Invitation to a Life of Meaning](#) by J.P. Moreland;

Do we have evidence that God exists?

While our intuition may point us to a spiritual reality, there is also a lot of evidence from philosophy, science, psychology, and mathematics that offers proof of God’s existence. If your teenager insists that there is no evidence for the existence of God, a good question to ask in response is, “What do you mean by evidence? What kind of evidence would you need to show that He exists?” There are many arguments that support God’s existence. We will talk about three of them in particular (the cosmological, teleological, and axiological arguments) in the following sections, but there are many more (see below).

Question to consider: How would the way you talk about God be different if you knew why you believed in Him?

Name to know: Peter Kreeft (Read: [“20 Arguments For God’s Existence”](#))

Books: [The Case for the Creator](#) by Lee Strobel; [Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics](#) by Norman Geisler

What’s the cosmological argument?

The cosmological argument seeks to answer the questions: Why is there something rather than nothing? How did we all get here?

The apostle Paul was educated by the Greeks. Greek philosophy argued for the existence of a Creator because it’s impossible for there to be an infinite regress in time. If there were an infinite number of past days leading up to the present, the present day never would have arrived. Since today has arrived, it makes sense that there were only a finite number of days before today. Necessarily then, time had to have a starting point, a beginning. What’s more, mounting evidence from science confirms that the universe had a beginning. This means that all of space, time, and matter had a beginning. If time had a starting point, who or what started it?

Whatever caused the beginning of the universe had to be immensely powerful, spaceless, eternal, and immaterial (spiritual). The Bible says in Genesis 1 that “In the beginning (time) God created the heavens (space) and the earth (matter).”

Must God have an explanation? No. [Since the time of Aristotle](#), philosophers have acknowledged that if God is eternal, then He has no beginning and therefore no cause. If God has no cause, there is nothing to explain. Besides this, we have to believe that either the universe itself is eternal or God is. So if all the evidence points to the universe having a beginning and if man came from the universe, where did the universe come from? If we are reasonable, the best explanation for the beginning of the universe is God. This is good news because it means we are not cosmic orphans or some kind of accidental freak of nature. Instead, this universe is our home, a place we belong.

Question to consider: If the universe came from nothing, is there any purpose to anything?

Names to know: William Lane Craig (Videos: [The Kalam Cosmological Argument](#), [The Leibniz’s Contingency Argument](#))

Website: [Reasons to Believe](#)

Books: [I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist](#) by Frank Turek; [Reasonable Faith](#) by William Lane Craig

What’s the teleological argument?

Paul also says that we can know God’s “eternal power... from what has been made” ([Romans 1:18-20](#)). It is as if Paul is exclaiming, “Look around you. How could all of this have just happened!? No, there has to be a design. There has to be a purpose.” This is the teleological argument. We might call it the argument from design. Essentially, anything that *appears* to be designed must have a designer. From the fine tuning of cosmological constants, down to the wonderful beauty and intricacy of our cellular biology, the appearance of design is undeniable. Since the universe and everything in it appears to be designed, it is reasonable to infer that the universe has a designer.

This argument has been one of the most persuasive, frequently used arguments by

Christian thinkers. It doesn't even require a robust knowledge of theology or science, just common sense. In fact, many Christian thinkers make this entire argument based on atheistic philosophers and scientists, proving that you don't have to be Christian to see the design in the universe. [Psalm 139](#) says that we are fearfully, wonderfully, and marvellously woven together with a unique, divine design in mind. If there is no Designer, then this isn't true. If there is a Designer, then we have a purpose that adds meaning, value, and dignity to our lives.

Questions to consider: Are people more valuable if they are the product of time+matter+chance, or if they are designed by God? What does this mean for how should we treat them?

Names to know: John Lennox (Video: "[We Are Created by Design](#)"); William Lane Craig: (Video: "[The Fine Tuning of the Universe](#)")

Websites: [Theology, Philosophy, and Science](#) YouTube channel (Start here: "[Atheism vs. Theism](#)"); and [Ravi Zacharias International Ministries](#) YouTube channel (Start here: "[Are God and Faith Anti-Science and Anti-Reason?](#)")

Books: [There Is a God: How the World's Most Famous Atheist Changed His Mind](#) by Antony Flew; [God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?](#) by John Lennox

What's the axiological argument?

Better known as the moral argument, the axiological argument seeks to show that our innate sense of right and wrong points to the existence of God. Stated simply, if God does not exist, then there would be no right or wrong, but because there is real evil and real good, God exists. Some say that we can know right and wrong without believing in God, which is true (you can be good without believing in God, and you can do terrible things while believing in God). However, what you cannot do is explain why we should refrain from evil and do good if there is no God. Without belief in God, there is no objective meaning to our lives, and no purpose to human history.

For example, let's compare the lives of Adolf Hitler and Mother Teresa. If there is no God, then there is no purpose to human history, and there is essentially no difference between Hitler ending as many lives as possible and Mother Teresa's efforts to save as many lives as possible. What Hitler did has no more meaning than what Mother

Teresa did; we cannot say that either one of these people lived a better life or would be a better role model. Are we really ready to say that things like racism and genocide are not wrong? How then should we live? If there is no God, then questions about how we *ought* to live are meaningless. But if there is a God, then questions about right and wrong are actually clues to living a meaningful life.

Some might object by saying that there is too much evil in the world to believe that God exists. However, evil may actually give us a reason to believe in God! Evil is a distortion of the way things ought to be. If we say things ought to be a certain way, we are actually saying there is a design to how we should live, a “time and place for everything,” as Ecclesiastes has been saying all along. ***Evil does not disprove God’s existence; it actually reveals our need for a savior.*** It is one thing to talk about the evil in the world around us, but what do we do with the evil in our own hearts? If we are all part of the problem, how can any of us possibly be the solution? Instead of thinking about living up to culture’s moral standard or even what we perceive to be God’s moral standard, how many of us can even live up to our own standard of goodness? The moral argument not only points to God’s existence, it also points to our need for forgiveness.

Questions to consider: Are there some things that really are wrong? How can what’s wrong be made right?

Names to know: William Lane Craig (Videos: “[The Moral Argument](#),” “[Evil and Suffering: The Logical Problem](#)”); Ravi Zacharias (Video: “[Why Suffering? Finding Meaning in a Difficult World](#)”); Voddie Baucham (Video: “[Why Does Evil Exist?](#)”)

Websites: [Inspiring Philosophy](#) YouTube Channel (Start here: “[The Moral Argument](#)”)

Books: [Mere Christianity](#) by C.S. Lewis, [Cries of the Heart](#) by Ravi Zacharias, [Walking with God through Pain and Suffering](#) by Timothy Keller

Couldn’t all this evidence point to a different god?

So far we’ve discussed how the cosmological argument points to an immensely powerful, spaceless, and timeless God. The Design argument necessitates a very intelligent God, and the moral argument indicates the reality of a loving God and our need for a savior.

The God of the Bible is the all-powerful ([Job 26:14](#), [Psalm 62:11](#)), ever present ([1 Kings 8:27](#), [Proverbs 15:3](#)), everlasting ([Isaiah 26:4](#)), supremely wise ([Jeremiah 10:12](#), [Job 9:4](#)) God who loves us with a steadfast love ([Psalm 136:12](#)). In fact, [Zephaniah 3:17](#) sums it up best: “The Lord God is with you, He is mighty to save, He will take Great delight in you, He will quiet you with His steadfast love, and He will rejoice over you with you singing.”

You might say, “What about our need for a savior?” Well, this is the totally unique thing about Christianity. All of the verses used above point to the God of the Old Testament reaching out to save His creation. In fact, He told His prophets that He would send one to save them forever. We know this person as Jesus, who [fulfilled hundreds of prophecies](#) mentioned in the Old Testament.

One way to present this case to your teenagers is simple: read [Isaiah 53](#), [Psalm 22:1-18](#), and [Micah 5:2](#), then ask, “Who did I just read about?” Let them answer before explaining how these verses describe the place of Jesus’ birth, the kind of man He would be, the type of death He would die, and the purpose of His death. Most of these things Jesus couldn’t have planned for Himself, which is precisely the point. Because of texts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the prophecies have been verified to pre-date Jesus’ birth by hundreds of years. It’s a sheer mathematical impossibility that these things could all be true about one person. Yet, here we have Jesus, miraculously realizing all of these prophecies in real space and time.

Questions to consider: How is it good news that Jesus saves us and it isn’t up to us to save ourselves? Could we ever succeed in doing what Jesus did?

Names to Know: Ron Rhodes (Read: “[Witnessing to Jews](#)”); John Ankerberg (Read: “[The Case for Jesus the Messiah](#)”)

Resources: [The Bible Project](#) (Start here: “[Messiah](#)”); Dr. Chuck Missler (Video: “[Mathematics Says Jesus Is the Messiah](#)”)

Is Jesus God?

Despite what internet trolls say, Jesus really did live in Israel 2,000 years ago. We have good evidence from Scripture, as well as evidence in other non-biblical historical texts (in particular the writings of [Josephus](#)) that He actually existed. More importantly, Jesus

met all the requirements to be God. His disciples record that He had all the attributes of God: He was supremely powerful and ever present ([John 1:1-5](#) and [Matthew 28:18-20](#)). He was also recognized to be supremely wise, as He taught with authority and not like the other teachers ([Matthew 7:29](#)). He also considered Himself the savior ([Luke 9:20](#)). Even more than this, Jesus did things that only God could do, such as forgive sins, heal the sick, and cast out demons ([Luke 7:48](#)). Further, His disciples all taught that He was God ([Colossians 1:15-20](#)). Even a Roman centurion proclaimed, “Surely he was the [Son of God!](#)”

Most importantly, Jesus Himself claimed to be God ([John 10:30](#), [Revelation 1:8](#)). In fact, Christianity is unique among all the world’s religions in that we see the fullest revelation of God in a person. He is the fullest manifestation of God’s character and nature. In order to know what God is like, we look at Jesus. This is a major problem for skeptics who assert that Jesus was just a good teacher or miracle worker. If Jesus really existed and made the claim that he was God, then the skeptic has to say that Jesus was either a liar, out of his mind, or telling the truth. These are the only logical options we have.

Questions to consider: Who do you think Jesus is? How does your life reflect that?

Names to know: Andy Bannister (Video: “[Did Jesus Really Exist?](#)”); Mike Licona (Video: “[Islam vs. Christianity](#)”)

Websites: [CFI Ministries](#) (Video: “[Jesus: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord](#)”), [Christian Apologetics Research Ministries](#) (Read: “[Did Jesus Ever Exist](#)”) Theology, Philosophy, and Science YouTube channel: (Videos: “[Is Jesus Liar Lunatic or Lord?](#)” and “[Did Jesus Claim to Be God?](#)”)

Resources: “[Is Jesus God?](#)” from ReasonableFaith.com, [More Than a Carpenter](#) by Josh McDowell

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

This is the core question of the Christian faith. In fact, it may be the most important question that anyone, regardless of their religion or worldview, can ask. If Jesus rose from the dead, then he really is who he said he is. If not, Christians

are the most miserable of all people! Jesus and His disciples claimed that all of His life's work and ministry was proven by the resurrection and that this was the foundational reason for their faith ([John 2:19-21](#), [1 Corinthians 15:12-19](#)). Paul said as much in [1 Corinthians 15:17](#). The entire message of the Gospel hinges on Jesus' death and resurrection.

Thankfully, there are four universally agreed upon facts pertaining to Jesus' death and resurrection that nearly all scholars agree are true. You might say these facts are "common ground" between Christians and non-Christians because they are virtually indisputable from history. Any theory concerning the claim that Jesus rose from the dead must account for all four of these facts: 1. Jesus died on a cross; 2. The tomb of Jesus was empty; 3. The disciples of Jesus, as well as Paul (an enemy of Jesus), claimed to have post-crucifixion encounters with Jesus; and 4. The early church had a dramatic growth out of a Jewish and pagan culture. There is almost no other explanation for the growth of the early church than that Jesus rose from the dead.

It's obvious that the resurrection of Jesus cannot fit neatly into the contemporary worldview, or frankly any worldview except one of which it is the starting point. ***And that's the point.*** What happened on that first Easter Sunday is analogous to what happened on the first day of creation: "[It is a boundary event](#), at the point where the laws of physics cease to apply. It is the beginning of a new creation—as mysterious to human reason as the creation itself." The question then becomes: Does your worldview have room for mystery, wonder, and the miraculous or is it limited to only what can be proven through the scientific method. The beauty of Christianity is that both reason and wonder lead us to the God of the Bible, the historical Jesus, and the risen Lord.

Questions to consider: Why is the question of Jesus' resurrection the most important question we can ask? If Jesus rose from the dead, are our other questions as important?

Names to know: Gary Habermas (Videos: "[The Resurrection Argument that Changed a Generation](#)," "[The One-Minute Apologist](#)"); Mike Licona (Video: "[10 Common Myths about the Resurrection of Jesus](#)")

Websites: [Please Convince Me](#) (Start here: "[The Minimal Facts of the Resurrection](#)"); [Risen Jesus](#) (get free resources [here](#))

Resources: [The Resurrection of the Son of God](#) by NT Wright; [The Case for Christ](#) by Lee Strobel

Are miracles really possible?

Some may object to the resurrection's historicity on the basis that they have never seen a miracle or doubt that they are possible. But how do they know they don't happen today? People who say Jesus never could have been brought back to life after having died are also quick to believe that all life evolved from non-life several million years ago. A *sudden* miracle is no more miraculous than a slow one. In fact, the whole universe is a miracle! All of the evidence points to the fact that God started the universe, and if God exists, then miracles are certainly possible. It may be personal experiences, disappointments, or incredulity that cause us to disbelieve in the miraculous, but once we take the reasonable step of believing that God exists, there is no reason to believe that miracles are impossible. It's far easier to conceive of Jesus being brought back to life from God, than to say that all life came from nothing at all.

It's also important to remember that prior to the scientific revolution, few people would have doubted the reality of the spiritual realm or miraculous occurrences. Unlike previous eras of human history, modern people "know" something only through experimentation and verification, limiting what we know to what we can prove. There's nothing wrong with this way of thinking so long as we recognize its inherent limitations.

Questions to consider: What is a miracle? How would we know a miracle occurred if we saw one in our own lives?

Names to Know: Eric Metaxas (Video: "[God Is Alive Today](#)"); Frank Turek (Video: "[Are Miracles Really Possible?](#)")

Websites: [Got Questions](#) (Start here: "[Does God Still Perform Miracles?](#)")
[Cross Examined](#) (Start here: "[Are Miracles Metaphysically Possible?](#)")

Book: [Miracles](#) by Eric Metaxas

Is the Bible the Word of God?

The Bible is the product of two historical communities—ancient Israel and the early church—and it's the most sacred document upon which Christianity is built. To call oneself a Christian is to be in a continuing conversation with the stories, wisdom, and vision of Scripture.

There are many reasons to believe the Bible is the reliable word of God. First, Jesus quoted from nearly every book of the Old Testament, ascribing to it binding authority. Jesus also told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come after His resurrection and guide them in all Truth ([John 14:16-17](#)). This is why every book that's included in the New Testament was required to have been authored by an Apostle or to report the testimony of an Apostle. The Apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus and had been given special authority to teach in His name ([Acts 1:8](#)). This means that both the Old and New Testaments have Jesus' seal of approval.

The second argument for the Bible's reliability is the fulfillment of prophecies. There are numerous fulfilled prophecies about Jesus, dozens of prophecies about Kingdoms ([Daniel 7](#)), the nation of Israel ([Jeremiah 29:11-23](#)), and the Temple ([Matthew 24:2](#)).

Third, the Bible is unique. It's a collection of 66 books with more than 7 genres written by over 40 authors in 3 different languages on 3 distinct continents spanning 1,500 years, yet it tells one cohesive story from beginning to end. No other book in existence even comes close to that. This is only possible if one divine Person was guiding and inspiring the words of Scripture ([2 Peter 1:21](#)).

The fourth piece of evidence is the way that the Bible has powerfully impacted individuals and human history. Historian and political philosopher W. E. H. Lecky was no friend of Christianity, yet [he said of the Gospels](#), “The simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.”

Fifth is the durability of the Bible. [Since being written](#), it has faced ridicule, scorn, refutation, attempts to destroy every copy, and more, yet it endures. No other book in all of history comes close to the staying power of the Bible.

Finally, the evidence from history and archeology confirms the Bible's amazing accuracy

in recording many of the events it describes. Although the Bible is not a history book, God's intervention in and relationship with both the people of Israel and the early church are rooted in historical fact. Many archaeologists, such as [William Albright](#), became Christians as a result of the evidence they found in support of the Bible's claims. These six evidences together show that the Bible is in fact the Word of God.

Question to consider: How can we experience God through His Word?

Names to Know: Amy Orr-Ewing (Video: "[Can I Trust the Bible?](#)"), Voddie Baucham (Video: "[Why I Choose to Believe the Bible](#)")

Websites: [The Bible Project](#) (Video: "[What is the Bible?](#)"); [Got Questions](#) (Video: "[Is the Bible the Word of God?](#)"); [Three-Minute Theology](#) YouTube channel (Start here: "[How Is the Bible the Word of God?](#)")

Book: [The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict](#) by Josh McDowell

Can we trust the Bible?

Many people have questions about the Bible because it was written by men, there are many different translations, or there's uncertainty as to why some books were included and others weren't. There are many great books written on these topics (see below), but let's talk about them briefly, starting with the question of the Bible's human authorship. As we stated earlier, the Bible is the divine revelation of God delivered through human hands. If we say we can't trust the Bible because men wrote it, we cannot trust anything we learn in science books, either!

What about translations? Why would it be a problem that there are many ways to communicate the same truth? In fact, one of the Bible's strengths is that it can be translated into any language and still be understood by its readers. No widely accepted translation actually changes any key doctrine of the faith.

What about other "gospels"? While there were other stories written about Jesus and other letters written by the early Church, there was a major distinction made by Protestants during the Reformation period between the books that were historically recognized by the church (and therefore included in the the canon) and those texts that the church fathers believed to be unworthy of including in the Bible we all recognize

today. For this reason, they are known as apocryphal or “extra-canonical” texts. Many of these apocryphal writings were not universally accepted by the early church due to their divergence from the main themes of Scripture. For these reasons, they were rejected as authoritative, even if they were (and still are) widely read for devotions and edification of believers.

Questions to consider: Ask your student these questions or share your own answer: What does the Bible mean to you? How has it helped guide you in your daily life? Tell a story about a time you were really thankful for the Bible.

Name to know: Mike Licon (Video: “[How Did the Bible Become Compiled in One Volume?](#)”)

Websites: [Three-Minute Theology](#) YouTube channel (Video: “[How Did We Get the Bible?](#)”); [Inspiring Philosophy](#) YouTube channel (Start here: “[The Truth About the Council of Nicaea](#)”)

Books: [A General Introduction to the Bible](#) by David Ewert, [Why Trust the Bible?](#) by Amy Orr-Ewing, [An Introduction to the New Testament](#) by Raymond E. Brown.

What about other religions?

All religions are exclusive at some point. They can’t all be true because they differ on the natures of God, man, sin, salvation, heaven, hell, and creation. Jesus claimed to be “the way, the truth, and the life” ([John 14:6](#)). Because the evidence shows that this is true, other religions cannot also be true.

What’s unique about Christianity among all other religions is the person of Jesus. While other religions are about people doing good things to attain some kind of reward, Christianity is about Jesus doing what we could never do, rewarding us with what we could never earn on our own. Christians are not good in order to get heaven as a reward; rather they are good because something heavenly has already changed them. The fact that “no one comes to the Father but by me” is incredibly good news because were our salvation up to us, we would mess it up every time. The important thing to ask teens is simply this: “If you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?”

Questions to consider: Do you personally know of anyone who does not believe in Jesus? What kind of things do you talk about with them?

Name to know: Ravi Zacharias

Website: [Ravi Zacharias International Ministries](#) (Video: “[How Do I Know that Christianity Is the One True Religion?](#)”)

Books: [Jesus among Other Gods](#) by Ravi Zacharias; [God among Sages](#) by Kenneth Samples

Will discussing these things guarantee that my child will never walk away from God?

If we knew of a way that we could absolutely guarantee that your teen wouldn't walk away from God, then trust us, we would be screaming it from the rooftops! But alas, there's no such guarantee. Teens may still express doubt even if they know the answers to the most basic questions about Christianity. **This is because there are actually three kinds of doubt: intellectual, emotional, and volitional doubt.**

Intellectual doubts come from having questions regarding the truth of Christianity, which we've examined in some detail above. However, **emotional doubts** are not questions about the evidence as much as feeling as if Christianity is untrue. Emotional doubts may stem from a traumatic experience and typically involve questions about the goodness of God or the efficacy of His forgiveness. The third kind of doubt, **volitional doubt**, is neither intellectual or emotional, but rather a doubt of the will. A person experiencing volitional doubt may simply be asking why the evidence of God's goodness matters at all and may tend to be apathetic and not care about the truth.

Identifying the kind of doubt your teenager is experiencing is the first step in determining how you respond because each type of doubt requires different guidance. The first two—intellectual and emotional—are more easily remedied than volitional doubt because they require discussion, a safe place to ask questions and possibly confess, and patient love. In contrast, the last type—volitional

doubt—is often best remedied by acknowledging that we can’t *make* them believe and that the best thing we can do is trust that God is at work while we continue living lives that exude the true joy and flourishing found only through Christ. We must also remember that faith isn’t merely believing the right things about God, but it is also a life of faithfulness toward the God revealed in Scripture. To limit faith to merely thinking the right things about God and not living them out daily is an impotent faith after all. Therefore, we must also equip our teenagers to own their faith by living it out. ***There is no such thing as abstract faith that is not personally embodied in the real world.***

Questions to consider: Talk to your student about your own doubts. Who were some of the people in the Bible who asked questions and wrestled over doubts with God?

Names to know: Brett Kunkle (Video: “[Four Facets of Doubt](#)”); Bobby Conway (Videos: “[What Is the Root of Doubt?](#)”; “[What Is Intellectual Doubt?](#)”; “[What Is Emotional Doubt?](#)”; “[What Is Volitional Doubt?](#)”); Gary Habermas (Video: “[Doubt](#)”)

Websites: [Matthew Cochran](#) (Start here: “[The Three Kinds of Doubt](#)”); [Ligonier Ministries](#) (Start here: “[I Believe in Doubt](#)”)

Book: [In Two Minds: The Dilemma of Doubt and How to Resolve It](#) by Os Guinness

Final thoughts

Helping teens wrestle with doubt is intimidating. The process often takes time because there are rarely quick fixes or easy answers. Remember not to rush into things. **Instead, start by asking good questions.** Question the questions. Next, be honest with them about your own doubts and search out answers together. By leading with vulnerability, teens will see that there is space and freedom to question and wrestle with the truth. Their doubts offer us parents the opportunity to model God’s unending compassion by helping them understand that there is no shame in having doubts. Last, take comfort in the words of George MacDonald, a mentor to C.S. Lewis: “You doubt because you love the truth” (*Lilith*). “Doubts are the messengers of the Living One to rouse the honest

heart” (*Unspoken Sermons*). Rest in the fact that your teen’s doubts may actually be the first step into a more vibrant, authentic faith that they can call their own and that cannot be “[blown here and there](#) by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”

Related Axis Resources

- [The Culture Translator](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related
- [A Parent’s Guide to the Bible](#)
- [A Parent’s Guide to the Evidence for the Resurrection](#)
- [Bible Video Kit](#)
- [A Parent’s Guide to Discipling Teenagers](#)
- Check out [axis.org](#) for even more resources!
- If you’d like access to all of our digital resources, both current and yet to come, for one low yearly or monthly fee, check out the [All Axis Pass!](#)

Additional Resources

- [Tactics](#) by Gregory Koukl. A game plan for helping Christians learn how to think critically about their faith and discuss big ideas.
- “[65 Questions Every Parent Must Answer](#)” from Cross Examined. A list of tough questions and links to answers your teens might be looking for.
- [Holman’s Quicksource Guide to Apologetics](#) by Doug Powell. A good primer for answering questions listed here, as well as many more.
- [The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity](#) by Alex McFarland. An introductory book written for teenagers to answer some of the basic questions about God, Christianity, and Jesus.
- [Apologetics Study Bible for Students](#). A study Bible by Dr. Sean McDowell with tons of great articles addressing nearly every critical issue teenagers face today, written with skeptical teens in mind.
- [The One-Minute Apologist](#). A YouTube channel designed to equip students to share their faith and explain why they believe what they believe in the shortest amount of time possible (e.g between classes).

A Parent's Guide to **A DOUBTING TEEN**

Recap

- We live in an increasingly post-Christian culture that no longer accepts the basic tenets of Christianity as universal truth. Because of this, your teens will have doubts that are normal, healthy, and lead to great conversation.
- We acknowledge that there is truth and that truth is good. Real tolerance is agreeing that people have the right to believe whatever they want while understanding that not everything we believe is right.
- We were made for a spiritual reality that we have yet to experience. This causes us to try and find our purpose, ultimately pointing us to the One who gives purpose to our existence: God.
- While our intuition may point us to a spiritual reality, there is also a lot of evidence from philosophy, science, psychology, and mathematics that offers proof of God's existence.
- The evidence for God's existence, including numerous biblical passages, prove that the God of the Bible is the One true God.
- Jesus did exist, and he met all the requirements to be God. Historical accuracies for Christians and non-Christians back up the fact that he rose from the dead. There is almost no other explanation for the growth of the early church than that Jesus rose from the dead.

A Parent's Guide to **A DOUBTING TEEN**

Recap (continued)

- The Bible is the divine revelation of God delivered through human hands. No widely accepted translation actually changes any key doctrine of the faith.
- The Bible is reliable and unique, in part due to its durability over time and the historical evidence behind its accuracy.
- Jesus claimed to be “the way, the truth, and the life.” Because the evidence shows that this is true, other religions cannot also be true.
- Identifying the kind of doubt your teenager is experiencing is the first step in determining how you respond because each type of doubt requires different guidance.

Hint: Screen shot or print these pages to refer back to later!