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SAVING FACE & ALL THE REST

Share the Gospel with Asian Atheists

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Leslie Neal Segraves, DMiss.



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Saving Face and All the Rest: Share the Gospel with Asian Atheists
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Special Thanks

We appreciate our 10/40 Connections Board of Directors, our 10/40 team members and volunteers, and our church and financial partners. You have come alongside us and have kept us going these past 18 years. Thank you so much! Because of your consistent efforts and diligent prayers, Jesus' name is lifted high and many who had never known of his kingdom and peace have been blessed.

We also thank our international partners, issue networks, and ministry friends whom we labor with and beside. We count it a privilege to know you, serve with you, and bring in a harvest together. May you all continue to flourish through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, it is our prayer that this eBook will help our brothers and sisters in Christ understand better how to express the truth of God's Word with their atheist friends. And if an atheist friend opens these pages, may the brief answers offered here serve as a peaceful and harmonious melody in a world of clanging cymbals. Know that the One who designed your mind and heart desires to be known by you. He exists, and he rewards those who diligently seek him.





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Introduction

Ella Grace and her husband James regularly visited a restaurant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They treated their new waiter with kindness. They never imagined that a genuine smile and simple, friendly questions would lead to an amazing change in this young waiter's life.

Zhou (Joe) enjoyed his job waiting tables at the diner. He liked most of his customers, but he particularly liked James and Ella Grace. One day he asked Ms. Ella Grace what made her so happy. Her answer surprised him. "I am happy because I am a Christian."

Her simple statement made his mind race. Zhou came from a family in China that believed no god existed. Some of his family followed a few religious traditions, but young Zhou learned from an early age that since no one has ever seen God, he could not be real. Yet, questions occasionally popped into Zhou's mind. "Where did all life begin?" "How do the leaders know that God does not exist?"

The next time James and Ella Grace were his customers, Zhou decided to ask them a bold question. "Can you teach me about your God?"

Surprised and thrilled, they began to study the Bible together. A few weeks later, Zhou declared his allegiance to Jesus Christ.

A smile, a kind word, a sincere question, a simple answer, an open heart, a willing evangelist – led to a saved life.

Whether you travel to a nation steeped in atheism or encounter a person in your daily walk from one of these areas of the world, you can make an impact that will affect eternity.

While living in China, God gave us the opportunity to listen and learn from hundreds of our students – most of whom were atheists. As we taught English on an engineering campus, we made many friends and dialogued with brilliant students who examined life analytically. One assignment we gave our students helped us realize that even people steeped in atheistic faith still ponder deep questions about life.

We asked students to write a journal entry on this question, "What is the purpose of my life?"

We instructed them, “Think about it tonight when it’s finally quiet, the lights are off, and you lie down in bed. Then when you wake up the next day, write your response in English.”

Many thoughtful responses indicated their dreams, fears, and concerns. One student shared, “Darkness, lying in bed, trying to fall asleep. This is my least favorite part of the day. I hate it. I have no idea why I exist and that makes me scare[d].”

Through classroom assignments and numerous personal conversations, God helped us understand that even though these young thinkers struggled with deep issues of life, purpose, morality, and hope, one crucial roadblock “concretized” their worldview.

The stronghold of evolution kept many students from seeking God. Dozens of our students told us, “Because man came from monkeys, God does not exist.” In order to speak about God, we realized we needed to address the stronghold of evolution that deeply impacts not only one’s view about religion, but also one’s purpose for living.

This eBook seeks to share what we learned as we sought to share our faith with atheists who had been taught that only those who were weak, old, or sick needed the crutch of God. Many had been taught that because God could not be experienced by the senses, he did not exist. To these statements we always asked, “How do you know your senses perceive all that exists?” and “What scientific test can prove that God does *not* exist?”

We have found simple and strong questions, presented in the context of genuine and kind friendship, find a warm reception in hearts that seek wisdom.

Disclaimer

We hope that this book helps you, the reader, understand how to share the Good News with your friends who have been inundated with an atheistic worldview from the beginning of their lives.

This eBook is *not* aimed primarily at reaching atheists from the U.S. who come from a disillusioned Christian family or those from a nominal Christian background or those who aggressively seek to destroy the worldview of the American people (i.e. Freedom From Religion group). These people definitely need the truths found in this

book and a relationship with Jesus! But they carry different emotional/spiritual baggage than the issues addressed here for people raised in an atheistic society.

Also, because of our personal experience in China, many of our examples come from there. All names have been changed due to security concerns. We wrote this eBook to help people in personal interactions with their atheist friends or neighbors. In this eBook we do not highlight the government mandates or the distinctions among communist, atheist, or secular states.¹ Russia, China, Cuba, North Korea, and Eastern European nations each have their own flavor of atheism, but here we discuss practical ways to engage in conversations rather than draw distinctives about any specific nation.

Additionally, though many of the conversations in this eBook imply conversing in a one-on-one situation, we have a higher aim. For sustaining and multiplying the church, we much prefer what we call “multi-individual decisions.” When a whole family comes to faith in Christ at the same time they have a ready-made community and a buffer against persecution (see biblical examples of Cornelius (Acts 10) and Lydia (Acts 16)). Therefore, this eBook can be used to address the questions of individuals or groups. Ideally, multiple individuals and extended families will all respond to Christ by faith!

How to Engage Atheists

You may be familiar with the passage in Psalm 14:1, *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”* Well, the psalmist’s language clearly points out the folly and demise of those who do not believe God exists. However, this verse is really *NOT* the place to start when sharing with an atheist.

In this eBook we seek to help you address some of the main concerns and obstacles atheists face in their atheistic societies. In

¹ A century ago, Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin described religion as “the vodka” and “the opium of the people.” Lenin believed religion numbed and pacified people causing them to live in an “imaginary world.” As a result of communist expansion by Lenin and other leaders at the time, atheistic doctrine spread through many nations.

these areas of the world, Jesus provides the honor, the harmony, the power, and the answer that the atheistic world longs to experience. As His followers, our task is to pray for our atheistic friends and learn how to speak to their hearts in a way that makes sense to them.

God uses Christians like you to offer salvation to the atheist's heart and help them find the honor and harmony they seek in life. We encourage you to do the following when speaking with your friend:

1. Rely on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the ONLY One who can open an atheist's mind and heart. Only the Spirit can empower an atheist with the courage to understand Truth and respond to it.
2. Always pray before speaking with an atheist. Though they profess atheism, that does not mean they are a blank slate. Their worldview has been formed by strong authoritarian teaching and a cultural tendency that accepts the words of their authority figures without question. Any conversation with an atheist concerning spiritual matters WILL BE a spiritual conflict. Therefore, pray! While we lived in China, we heard hundreds of times, "God does not exist." Though this statement is not true, we found the statement held much spiritual weight and we needed to pray for protection from these lies.
3. Determine (if possible) the type of atheist with whom you are speaking. We have found three main types.
 - A. The great majority of atheists desire friendship, so be a good friend! Many would love to hear stories of the Bible, though they may not initially see the relevance. For these, keep it simple and build a good friendship. Share meals, visit in their homes, and ask how you can pray for them.
 - B. Those who have open minds but require a logical approach may have 5-10 basic questions about science or the sensory world that once answered can enable them to move forward with deeper questions about faith. These people may have some major misconceptions but they are still open to discussion. With these, try to move to the main point of the Gospel and avoid contentious or political side issues.

- C. A small percentage may have pledged their loyalty to the Communist Party or some such organization. For these men and women, not only their worldview, but their livelihood could be at stake. They may appear somewhat defensive or aggressive (we have met some people very interested, yet heartbroken that they “cannot choose Christ”). If you are prepared spiritually and mentally to share with these people, go for it. Much of the information here applies to them. However, argumentative conversation is not our heart and is beyond the scope of this eBook. More intense conversations/debates (with the defensive types) should be very rare.
4. Know your personal testimony and speak up. The undeniable story of your own changed life will make a significant impact on your atheistic friends. Speak about your faith within the first 10 minutes of meeting someone (seriously!) You can discuss your prayer life, something learned in your Bible study, or a favorite Bible verse. These early conversations let your friend know you are a person of active faith, open to talking about religious topics. Otherwise, they may think you are a “typical” (in their mind), secular, indulgent, entertained Westerner. When we share about our meaningful faith and how it transforms us, though some are possibly amused or shocked, most demonstrate genuine interest.
5. Understand the background and some of the main objections of most educated atheists. If your friend does not bring up evolution, you don’t have to mention it. But in our work with atheists from communist nations we discovered that most, if not all, need to work through the obstacles to faith planted deep in their worldview by the education system during their primary school years.

We pray that you will find the answers you need to share the strong truth that Jesus changes lives. The Good News is truly “good,” and for most of the world’s atheists the Good News is “new” to them.

One

Powerful Childhood Examples

The schoolteacher mocks, “Children, put your head on your desk. Now, I want you to ask God for a piece of candy.”

The students obey. No candy appears. Like a blacksmith using their tools of hammer and fire on pliable metal, the Chinese atheistic schools teach lessons that forge the worldview of young children.

“Now, ask your government for a piece of candy.”

When they ask, the teacher hands candy to each student.

“See children, God does not exist, but your Motherland will always help you.”

Schools continually instruct children and youth that God does not exist, and that people who believe in God are weak or inferior.

Over 500 million youth and children under 18 years old reside within the nation of China. As in all nations on the earth, worldview develops most between ages of 4 and 14. Knowing the impressionable nature of children, the Chinese government considers it illegal to teach children about “superstitious” religions. The law states that Christians should not “brainwash” teenagers with religious beliefs. The law also states that Christians cannot bring children under 18 to religious meetings.²

One of China’s house church leaders shared her story with us. “When my school teacher mentioned that ‘God does not exist’ I had never heard of God, so I thought in my mind, ‘perhaps God does exist.’ Otherwise, why would my teacher tell us about God? When the teacher told our class, ‘Some people foolishly follow a man named Jesus, but he is wrong,’ I thought, ‘Hmm, someone named Jesus exists and he has a powerful message for people.’”

Essentially God protected her mind as a child and allowed this house church leader to flip around each incorrect teaching in her mind. This “flipped methodology” caused her to seek for answers.

² See “Seven Rules of the Three Self Patriotic Movement” in *China News and Church Report*, December 3, 1993. Rule #5 – “Christian believers must actively cooperate with the government to carry out thoroughly, the party’s religious policies to the letter. They shall not force others to believe in Christianity. They shall not brainwash teenagers under 18 with religious beliefs. They shall not bring children (under 18) to religious activities.”

Many years later she found a Bible and soon became a powerful leader in the Chinese church.

In spite of this one good example, millions of other children are not protected from atheistic indoctrination. They grow up with a worldview that denies the existence of God. They are taught to refuse to believe in something they cannot see or hear or touch. For these types of students we ask a series of simple questions, knowing that some questions work better than others. These thoughts begin to peck away at hard-heartedness forged as a child. We ask,

“Have you ever seen electricity?”

“Have you ever seen the wind?”

“Is love real?”

This discussion allows them to admit their inconsistent logic. They know wind exists, electricity is real, and love causes them to do crazy things. They cannot see or grasp these truths with their hands, yet they believe in them.

After these questions we usually say something like, “Hey, your statement reminds me of a story from the Bible. One of Jesus’ followers named Thomas said pretty much the same thing you said. He also refused to believe if he could not see or touch. Do you know what Jesus told him? Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’ Did you know there is a Bible story of someone who stated your same objection?”

Overcoming years of a worldview formed since childhood may not happen overnight. But your job is to love and encourage and ask questions that help open the mind of your friend.

Two

The Other Side of Evolution

The second-grade school teacher stood in front of the class of 7-8 year olds. “Students repeat after me, ‘Because man came from monkeys, God does not exist.’”

The young students without blinking, stated the sentence back to the teacher.

“What did I say?” the teacher asked.

“Because man came from monkeys, God does not exist,” the united students echoed.

Like a mantra pounded literally thousands and thousands of times into the hearts and minds of schoolchildren, this phrase helps frame many atheists’ worldview and belief system.

While living in China we invited hundreds of university students into our home. Whenever the topic of God arose, this phrase almost always came up.

This one little sentence seemed to stand as a crucial cornerstone of their atheistic worldview. We realized we needed to develop a loving and strong answer regarding this phrase in order to speak into the hearts of our Chinese friends. To be honest, we were pretty nervous about this multi-layered stronghold. But God enabled us to begin peeling away the objections.

We realized, thankfully, that we did not have to become a complete expert on science or evolutionary theory. But we did need to know a few brief scientific answers or even quotes from famous scientists to honor our Chinese friends’ worldview. By doing this, our friends felt more free to explore the reality of faith.

Three Guiding Points to Know for Atheistic Evolution

Addressing the vast mountains of information that cover evolution can be daunting, especially if you are not a “science person.” But even if you love science, knowing where to begin can be tricky. So here are some tried and tested hints.

The Scientific Method is a great place to start.³ Strong believers in atheism usually profess to have a thorough trust in the Scientific Method, which is great. Through the empirical results (tangible proof) of the Scientific Method, theories can be proposed, tests can be repeated, conclusions can be drawn, and laws can be proven. We keep in mind the following three initial facts about the Scientific Method when discussing with Asian atheists who rely on evolution to discredit faith.

1. While micro-evolution has been scientifically tested and proven (change occurs within a species), macro-evolution (across species) has NOT been proven.
2. The “theory” of evolution serves simply as a possible historical reconstruction about the cause and adaptation of life. It is not a repeatable test or a provable law. Therefore, it is not called the “law of evolution.”
3. In the primary schools of atheistic nations, Darwin’s theory of evolution is taught as a “proven law of nature.” A good lead-in question is, “So is evolution a law or a theory?” We may remind our friends that a scientific law should be proven over and over (like gravity) before it can be called a “law,” and every theory has to undergo testing to see if it stands or falls. We ask, “What testing has occurred to prove evolution so that it can be called a law?”

These three points regarding the Scientific Method should give you confidence that the topic can be discussed without delving into complex formulas. Laying the groundwork of the Scientific Method opens the door and can lead to the following line of questions.

What Science Experiment?

Face it, macro-evolution is an onion with multifaceted layers. It will take some time to peel back the different arguments, and in the process some tears will be shed. Hopefully, they will be tears of

³ As followers of Christ, we know and rely on the Holy Spirit to guide our words during conversations. All of the answers and suggestions we offer in this eBook can be overridden by the prompting of Jesus during conversations with your friend.

repentance and joy by your friends as they realize that God exists and desires a relationship with them!

One fun way we have engaged in spiritual conversation with our atheistic friends is to address the topic of science. Usually on our campus, students brought up science first, i.e. “Since man came from monkeys, God does not exist.”

Once we confirm that they do not believe in God but trust in science we ask, “So what type of science experiment can a scientist use to prove that God exists?” “None!” they proudly answer.

“What about a pendulum or a spring or a mixing of chemicals?” we continue, “Will any such experiment prove that God exists?”

“Absolutely not!” they respond confidently.

And so the logical trap is set.

We then continue with the clinching question. “And what science experiment (pendulum, spring, or chemical reaction) can be performed to prove that God does *not* exist?”

Usually at that time, they realize the hole they just fell into. That small line of questioning can help open the door for your friend to see that perhaps science *cannot* answer every question they encounter in life. (When we ask these questions, we do so with a smile on our face – not a “gotcha” attitude.)

Lectures on “The Other Side”

During our time in China, we delivered lectures on university campuses entitled, “The Other Side of Evolution.” The students had heard that evolution was true, but had never been exposed to the growing scientific information indicating that Darwin’s castle of macro-evolution stood on a foundation of sand. During these lectures the students responded very positively, and many asked excellent questions. Nobody wants to believe a lie, but people need a solid reason to change their mind. We simply provided some scientific answers to help them choose wisely.

The following six sections only scratch the surface but will give you a brief outline for possible areas of conversation with your friend. Of course, we recommend that you do further research as new examples are discovered and new theories are proposed. But please do not think that you must have all the answers before you

start to share with your atheist friend. Your job may be raising questions and helping them to think for themselves.

In our lectures on “The Other Side of Evolution” (TOSE) we examined the scientific possibility of macro-evolution with regard to six fields: astronomy/mathematics, physics, biology, genetics, biochemistry, and paleontology. Basically we try to show, without referencing the Bible,⁴ that macro-evolution as understood by the majority of atheists is “scientifically impossible.”

Since our lecture was done in English with students who spoke English as a second language, we used many illustrations, dramas, and object lessons to help them understand more easily. We and the students had a lot of fun with these lectures. We kept the entire presentation focused on science and never once referenced God. We found plenty of scientific information to demonstrate the faulty foundation of macro-evolutionary belief as a basis for atheism.

During the question/answer time, we responded to students with gentleness, humor, and care. Often the questions would expand past the realm of science, even allowing us to introduce the concept of “Intelligent Design.”

Purely based on student inquiries we were able to state, “Because of your question, we will tell you what we believe. We know the Intelligent Designer’s name. It is Jesus. He is God, and we have a living relationship with him. Any more questions?” With your friends in personal conversations, you can say much more than we did in a lecture hall. So have fun with this!

⁴ We love the Bible, but for scientific lectures on Chinese college campuses, we could not use it as the initial starting point.

Three

TOSE 1 – Astronomy/Mathematics

The first field of study of the other side of evolution involves probability. If a person randomly picks the right lottery number, we call them “lucky” (if the chances are 1 in 10 million). If their luck continued a second or a third time with the lottery, we would say “Wow, amazing!” If a person picked the winning lottery number seven times in a row, what would you think?

That type of “luck” officially qualifies as beyond reason, absurd, mathematically impossible.

The Probability of Life

So here is the question...What is the probability of random atoms colliding to produce a single living cell? (Stick with us here. The numbers get pretty large, but we leave out the complicated math, or at least footnote some of it.)

Harold Morowitz, molecular biology professor at Yale, calculated the total number of “atomic events” needed to produce a single living cell. Comparing that number with the total number of atomic events in the history of the universe gives the probability of single living cell forming.

$10^{(100,000,000,000)}$ In theory, this # of atomic events is needed to produce one living cell.

$10^{(121)}$ events⁵ Total events since the world began.

Putting these two numbers together gives the probability

⁵ George Smoot, astronomer at the University of California in 1992 calculated the age and size of universe using the Hubble space telescope and COBE program. His team also calculated the amount of matter in universe.

- Age of Universe: $10^{(17)}$ seconds = 15 Billion Years (not quibbling over Young Earth/Old Earth here)
- Matter in Universe: $10^{(84)}$ baryons (particles)
- Particle interactions: $10^{(20)}$ events/second
- Max # of interactions between subatomic particles is $10^{(20)}$ events/second.
- $10^{(17)}$ seconds x $10^{(84)}$ particles x $10^{(20)}$ events/second = $10^{(121)}$ total atomic events since the world began.

$$10^{(121)} / 10^{(100,000,000,000)} = 1/10^{(100,000,000,879)} = 0$$

That is, there is ZERO probability that random atoms colliding could produce a single living cell based on the age of the universe and the number of particle interactions needed.

In case you are wondering, that is the same probability of choosing the winning lottery numbers 1.4 million times in a row!

Therefore, according to most mathematical calculations, a universe even 100 billion years old (not just 15 billion) is still not old enough for a single cell to have developed on earth.⁶

Two Other Scientific Notes

Francis Crick, the British molecular biologist who won the Nobel Prize winner in 1953 for discovering the double-helix structure of DNA, concluded that the most likely source of life on earth is a *meteor* bringing life to this planet, like a taxi! Obviously Crick's postulation still did not answer the "origin of life" question, since life still had to begin somehow on another planet!

Crick stated, "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state, that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have been satisfied to get it going."

Finally, Hugh Ross the Canadian-US astrophysicist, has outlined 60 criteria determined as necessary for life on earth to begin. If any of the 60 factors changed, then life could not exist. Some of the factors include:

⁶ On Chinese campuses, we did not distinguish between the Old Earth and Young Earth perspectives. This discussion of Old Earth/Young Earth would be a better topic among Christians. In our lectures on atheist university campuses, we stick with the Old Earth dates, because the only people who have even heard of a Young Earth are those who know the Genesis account and probably accept the Bible as the starting point (which is of course great with us.) But the point is not whether God can create a world with the appearance of age, or how do you calculate a "day" if the sun was created on the 4th day in the Genesis account. The point with your friend is not the age of the earth, but Who is responsible for its cause, and its order, and its complexity.

Slower rotation of earth	Smaller earth	Earth's thinner crust
Faster rotation of earth	Larger earth	Earth's crust thicker
2-5% further from sun	Smaller moon	Oxygen/Nitrogen ratio greater
2-5% closer to sun	Larger moon	Oxygen/Nitrogen ratio less
1% change in sunlight	More than one moon	Greater or lesser ozone

Ross's point is that the fragile and precise nature of Earth's life-supporting system requires much more than blind faith in a random universe. The studies of Morowitz, Smoot, Crick, and Ross all point to scientific reality. Astronomy and mathematics prove that life on earth based on an un-designed and random process of chance is "Scientifically Impossible!"

Four TOSE 2 – Physics

Moving on to the second area of scientific study for the other side of evolution, we look at two laws of physics and how they might interact with the theory of evolution.

The First Law

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that “Energy cannot be created or destroyed.”⁷ This statement means that the natural state of the universe leans toward *conservation* of energy, not the *innovation* (the creation) of energy.

So when considering the origin of life, one must ask, “From where did life come? How did we get here?” Since energy cannot create itself and nothing comes from nothing, how does this testable and provable First Law of Thermodynamics line up with the atheistic idea that life began from non-life?

These kinds of questions begin to open the mind to consider another option for the source of life.

The Second Law

Next, the Second Law of Thermodynamics states basically that, “Energy moves from hot to cold bodies, not from a cold body to hot.” Within the Second Law exists the powerful natural force of entropy.⁸

We see entropy at work when objects move from a higher level of energy to a lower state of energy. For example, water on a hillside flows down naturally. It does not flow up. Conversely, getting out of bed in the morning requires energy, whereas lying there proves much easier. Would it not be easier to simply fall out of bed and remain on the floor than to actually get up? Of course!

⁷ Precisely, the law of conservation of energy (of which the First Law of Thermodynamics is a part) states that in an isolated system, the total energy remains constant. Energy can change from one form to another, but is never created or destroyed.

⁸ The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that in a closed system, entropy (moving to lower energy state, which is usually more disordered) will either increase or remain the same. Entropy means that disorder increases.

Interestingly the word evolution means “rolling out” as in an outward and upward progression from one-celled organisms to human life. But entropy means “in turning” and results in a downward descent. So how could the natural force of entropy in the world lead to a natural situation of macro-evolution – moving outward and upward? (Hint: It doesn’t!)

Building something complex requires energy. So say an “energetic” tornado rips through a lumber yard full of small building materials – pipes, wood, nails, wires, shingles, concrete, etc. These pieces fly around as the tornado mixes them. In the end, would you expect to find a fully functional house? What if the tornado lasted for 100 years, or a million years? Would that make a difference? Obviously time is not the issue.

Complexity logically goes against entropy. Whether you illustrate the point with the creation of a precise “gold watch,” a 747 airplane, a dictionary created by mixing up letters of a Scrabble board, or human life, the Second Law of Thermodynamics argues against naturally (or accidentally) organized complexity in the universe.⁹

The theory of macro-evolution violates these two laws of physics. Various building blocks mixed energetically, along with random chance, over long periods of time, do not produce something useful. The laws of physics show that evolution is “Scientifically Impossible!”

⁹ Another interesting point involves finding a purpose or meaning in what is formed as well, which we will discuss later. An airplane is *meant* to fly, and a dictionary conveys *meaningful* words not just a random sequence of letters. (i.e. Our two-year-old can punch random keys on the keyboard. But if she creates a single, full sentence with intelligibility and meaning, we would conclude that she is brilliant, not that she typed with great luck.) Meaning implies intelligence.

Five
TOSE 3 – Biology

Let’s now turn to the third of our scientific fields – biology. In drawing the famous evolutionary “Tree of Life” which attempts to show common ancestry, Darwin put a lot of trust in the *structural* similarities between different animal kinds. In this brief section we will look at just a couple of examples that show the large leaps of logic and the numerous whole-system changes necessary to link different kinds of animals.

According to Darwin’s macro-evolution scheme, the Reptiles split into two evolutionary directions, which we will briefly compare.

1. Reptiles became Birds.
2. Reptiles became Mammals.

Reptile to Bird?

First, we will examine the changes needed in both specific organs and entire body systems to evolve from a reptile to a bird. To transition from a reptile into a bird, a reptile would need to adapt the following:



	Reptile	Bird
Wings	No wings	Wings – Including flight muscles and keeled sternum
Body Covering	Scales instead of feathers	Feathers – Interlocking. Most

		fossils have “inferred” feathers.
Bone Structure	Dense bones	Bones must be delicate, light, and hollow with a light tail structure
Circulatory System	Cold-blooded	Warm-blooded with high metabolism
Respiratory System	Similar to mammals. They breathe both in and out.	Birds don’t simply breathe in/out. They have a two-cycle breathing system and a one-directional air flow.

Additionally, most if not all of these structures and systems must be present at the same time to give a benefit. Again, evolution’s purpose is to increase, advance or benefit the species. One of these transitions alone does not advance it.¹⁰

Reptile to Mammal?

Second, we will examine the changes needed in both organs and systems to evolve from a reptile to a mammal. To transition from a reptile into a mammal, a reptile would need to adapt the following:

¹⁰ 1. Pro-evolution site says reptilian dinosaurs had feathers.

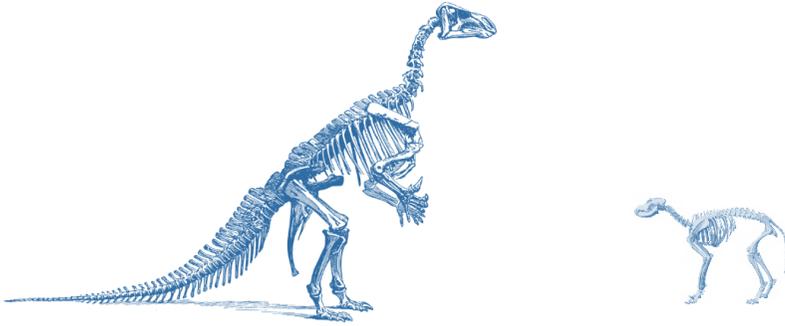
<https://answersingenesis.org/dinosaurs/feathers/>

2. Anti-evolution site says reptilian dinosaurs did not have feathers.

http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/evograms_06

3. Additional references to dinosaurs and feathers.

<https://answersingenesis.org/dinosaurs/feathers/did-dinosaurs-turn-into-birds/>



	Reptile	Mammal
Jaw Bone	Multiple jawbones that detach.	Jaw is fused and attached.
Ear Bone	Single ear bone structure and no Organ of Corti	Have three ear bones and the Organ of Corti (located in mammalian cochlea, receptor for hearing)
Reproductive System	Lay eggs	Gestate babies inside the female and give birth to live young.
Mammary Glands	No mammary glands	Females have mammary glands to feed the young
Circulatory System	Cold-blooded	Warm-blooded with temperature regulation
Body Covering	Scales, no hair	Has hair – which is distinct among mammals
Respiratory System	No diaphragm for breathing	Have and use a diaphragm

Again, most if not all of these structures and systems must be present at the same time, since only one of these transitions alone

does not give an advantage.¹¹ (i.e. a partial diaphragm serves no purpose for breathing.)

What do you think? What would make it necessary for reptiles to grow new body parts and evolve entirely new systems to perform functions that were already being performed efficiently and satisfactorily as a reptile? It seems like a great leap in logic to link together animals with different structures and systems.

Simultaneous Limb Evolution?

One final illustration will bring home our point in this comparative biology section. Darwin assumed that comparing similar body parts (*homology*) could show common ancestry. That is, the more body parts two animals shared in common, the closer they related in the evolutionary tree. But again, Darwin lacks evidence for this claim.

Sir Alistar Hardy, the British, marine biologist stated, "The concept of homology is absolutely fundamental to what we are talking about when we speak of evolution – yet in truth we cannot explain it all in terms of present day biological theory."¹²

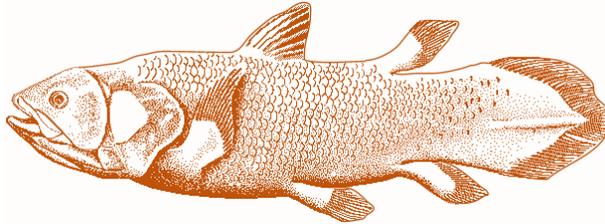
Interestingly, mammals share a similar if not identical limb structure. The classic example are the forelimbs. The human arm consists of the humerus, ulna, radius, metacarpals, carpals, and five phalanges. This compares similarly with other mammals.

However the same mammals also have a matching bone structure with their hind legs. The human leg consists of the femur, tibia, fibula, metatarsals, tarsals, and five phalanges. What is the probability of that?! Parallel adaptation of arms and legs by evolutionary chance – just sayin'!

¹¹ Plus, evolutionists have yet to offer a single scientific mechanism showing the exact and testable way that any of the listed adaptations could take place. Scientists examine not only the situations that could require a change, but exactly *how* such a change actually happened. Sadly, evolutionists can only say, "As birds evolved from these theropod dinosaurs, many of their features were modified." Or "Birds after *Archaeopteryx* continued evolving in some of the same directions as their theropod ancestors." Or "The evolutionary process caused reptilian structures to take on mammalian characteristics." But... how? Science must answer these questions to be considered science, rather than simply taking it on faith.

¹² Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, p. 151.

Of course, no evolutionist claims that the hind limbs evolved from the forelimbs, or even that they evolved from a common source. This claim forces quite a leap of logic. Here is the leap – that somewhere in the course of evolution (since fish gave rise to reptiles and reptiles to mammals), the pectoral fins of a fish became the forelimbs AND the pelvic fins IN THE SAME FISH became the hind limbs!



All of that amazing random change took place in the same fish... think about it! According to evolutionary theory, two identical paths of evolution (random, small changes over time) arrived at identical limbs in the same animal.¹³

As you can imagine, the technical material is thick, and we have only scratched the surface. But our point here again is that comparative biology proves that macro-evolution is “Scientifically Impossible!”

By this time the atheistic audience is often beside themselves wondering “What in the world is the answer? We have never heard any of this information before! Why have we never heard this other side of evolution? Who has kept this information from us?”

Notice that up to this point we have not discussed the Bible, or creation, or God **on purpose**. We first hope to show our friends that the foundational system in which they have been trusting is shaky and not worthy of their confidence. But wait, we are only half-way done... pretty amazing isn't it? If you need to take a second and just thank Creator God, go ahead and do so!

¹³ Denton, pp. 142-156. <http://www.amazon.com/Evolution-Theory-Crisis-Michael-Denton/dp/1936599325/>

Six

TOSE 4 – Genetics

The fourth field of scientific study we will consider is genetics. Much genetic mapping and research has been accomplished recently with the Human Genome Project, none of which was available in Darwin's day.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Darwin made some important contributions in the field of *micro-evolution* and his evidence firmly backs up his conclusions – “Change happens over time within a species.” This includes traits such as hair color, eye color, or beak shape in birds.¹⁵

DNA

Genetics involves information carried on strands of DNA (Darwin knew nothing about DNA). While it may be common sense, here is a simple example. A man who loses an arm or a leg in an accident does not pass this defect to his offspring. His DNA is wired for two arms and two legs. Therefore to change hereditary traits, one must change the DNA.

While each living creature contains DNA comprised of the same types of nucleobases (G, C, T, A), not all animals contain the same amount or type or combinations of DNA. For example, a fish does not possess the genetic material to produce legs. For a fish to grow legs, new and different DNA must be added from an outside source. Also a one-cell organism does not have the genetic material to produce a notocord that all invertebrates possess. The genes must be added from an outside source.



So how do macro-evolutionists say that genetic material (DNA) is added? Mutations.

¹⁴ Human Genome Project - <https://www.genome.gov/10001772>

¹⁵ Darwin's errors came in his hypothetical jump from *micro* to *macro*. He had, and still has today, no proof to back up this extrapolation.

Let us briefly look at mutations and consider what effect they have on the genetic code, and what structural or systemic changes result from genetic mutations.

Mutations

Mutations that change the genetic code can be increased by three ways:

1. Heat – The heat from the sun can produce many types of mutations. For this reason, we put on sunscreen. The sun's UV rays can cause mutations which can cause skin cancer.
2. Chemicals – Chemicals can also alter the genetic code. Some types of chemical carcinogens cause genetic mutations that result in cancers and/or kill cells. Chemicals can cause cancer and chemicals also can kill cancer. For this reason, some cancer patients undergo *chemo*-therapy to kill the affected cancer cells. But chemotherapy also results in collateral damage to other body systems. Bottom line, chemical mutations are rough on the body.
3. Radiation – Similarly, various forms of radiation can cause mutations. When conducting an x-ray, a technician will stand behind a screen or wear a lead jacket to protect themselves from the radiation. The radiation can cause types of cancer, through genetic mutations. Radiation therapy also seeks to kill off cancer cells in a targeted region.

Here are two points with regard to mutations:

1. Most mutations are neutral, harmful, or deadly. We typically try to avoid genetic mutations, because mutations almost always deteriorate cell life.
2. Mutations can only alter existing DNA. Never has a mutation been known to *add* genetic material to an already complex DNA system. A baby may be born with three arms, or even two heads, but a baby will never be born with antennae. Similarly, a baby born with lots of hair does not signal its descent from the monkey. All mammals have hair. What would signal a possible macro-evolution cross-over is if a

reptile were born with hair, or a bird that gave live birth, or a dog born with fins.

Two scientists help clarify any confusion about the potential for positive genetic changes based on mutations. From the French Academy of Science, Dr. Pierre-Paul Grasse stated, "No matter how numerous they may be, mutations do not produce any kind of evolution."

In the book *Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins*, author Percival Davis concludes: "There is no evidence that mutations create new structures. They merely alter existing ones. Mutations are quite rare. This is fortunate, for the vast majority are harmful, although some may be neutral."

Research has shown that only 1 out of 10,000 mutations from radiation are beneficial, and this is true only in single-cells organisms. Complex and multi-cell organisms (i.e. birds, squirrels, fish, and people) have seen only detrimental effects. Evolution strictly from mutations would require literally TRILLIONS of mutations to the DNA code.¹⁶

During their work on the Human Genome Project scientists began to ask, "How could the genetic code have *written* itself by chance mutation or genetic recombination, when we cannot even *read* it with our technology?" Excellent question, which we believe points out that macro-evolution cannot be based on positive genetic mutations. Examining the science of genetics demonstrates once again that evolution is "Scientifically Impossible!"

¹⁶ For one example of studies on radiation effects, see <http://www.mitosyfraudes.org/Ingles2/Rad-1.html>.

Seven

TOSE 5 – Biochemistry

We think this fifth scientific discipline is fascinating and the points regarding atheistic evolution are straightforward. Biochemistry researches and analyzes the chemical processes that make life function. These functions take place inside and between cells. Biochemistry answers the question, “How?”

As mentioned previously, Charles Darwin operated in the dark when it came to activity inside the cell. Technology allowed him to know that cells existed, but beyond that, the cell was a “black box.” The electron microscope was invented later and it revolutionized the scientific community's understanding of the cell.

In his famous work *The Origin of Species*, Darwin stated, “There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, *from so simple a beginning* endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.”

Darwin thought of and described a single-cell organism as “simple.” He was completely unaware that a “simple” cell actually operates more like a fully-functioning city. Cells incorporate a defense system, power generating system, energy transfer, communication system, waste disposal system, and data storage/library, as well as the magnificent ability to reproduce!

Darwin realized some of the limitations of evolutionary theory, and he described how it could crash. “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”¹⁷ Darwin clearly set the bar for how to disprove macro-evolution.

¹⁷ Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 1859, Chapter 6.

Complexity of DNA

Since they carry the complete genetic code of any given species, molecules of DNA are *very* complex. Regarding the storage capacity in a single cell, one cell contains information that would fill about a thousand 600-page books. And, the entire body can be reproduced and reassembled by this one cell!

As mentioned earlier in the section on genetics, the Human Genome Project using today's technology has only been able to describe and map out the DNA code. However, they have no answer for how DNA came to exist in the first place! Much less could the Genome Project create from scratch such a complex system of storing and replicating information.

DNA is made up of sequences of proteins. Theoretically, if one can arrange a protein sequence (many, many of them), one should be able to modify a genetic trait or, on a larger scale, reconstruct any specific kind of animal. Yet microbiologist Percival Davis stated, "It has proven impossible to arrange protein sequences in a macro-evolution series corresponding to the expected transitions, from fish to amphibian to reptile to mammal" (*Of Pandas and People*, 1993).

At this time, no scientist has offered an explanation for the origin of DNA, located inside the nucleus of a cell.

Irreducible Complexity

Another biochemical factor showing the uncertainty of macro-evolution is the concept of "irreducible complexity." Irreducible complexity means that each part is necessary or the whole is non-functioning. Every factor must originate at same time in right proportions and join together in the right way for the mechanism to work.

In his book *Darwin's Black Box*, biochemist Michael Behe describes a mousetrap that requires every part to work at the same time, or the mousetrap has no function (the base, the pin, the spring, the pin holder, the trapping bar). If any one of these parts were missing, what would happen? No mouse would be caught by the useless



gathering of parts. Thus in terms of evolution, certain body systems and organs require every structure and every chemical process to work together at the same time, or there is no function or no evolutionary advantage.¹⁸

A few systems which require multiple parts and processes at the same time include: the eye, the kidney, movement of cilia, red blood cells, DNA, and blood clotting.

Let's look at one example, the factors required for blood to clot. Of course without the clotting of blood, any bruise or cut would lead to certain death as an animal bleeds out. So blood clotting stands as a vital process for sustaining the life of both warm and cold-blooded animals.

For blood to clot properly all of the following factors must interact at just the right time and at just the right place and in just the right proportion. These include: prothrombin, a thrombin receptor, antithrombin, plasminogen, antiplasmin, proaccelerin, Stuart Factor, proconvertin, Christmas Factor, anti-hemophilic factors, and protein C.

If only 3 or 6 or 9 of these "pieces" came together, blood would not clot. If they did not come together at the right place, time, or ratio; blood would not clot. Thus the blood clotting process shows the great complexity of a system that is irreducibly complex.

Blood clotting reveals that a complex system requires many moving parts and chemical interactions. But what of the other examples? How does one proceed (by random genetic mutation) from an antenna to an eyeball? What chemical processes and physical parts cause cilia to swirl like an outboard motor?

To conclude, Behe states, "To Darwin, the cell was a 'black box' – its inner workings were utterly mysterious to him. Now the black box has been opened up and we know how it works. Applying Darwin's test to the ultra-complex world of molecular machinery and cellular systems that have been discovered over the past 40 years, we can say that Darwin's theory has 'absolutely broken down'."

¹⁸ http://www.amazon.com/Darwins-Black-Box-Biochemical-Challenge/dp/0743290313/ref=sr_1_1ie=UTF8&qid=1458192431&sr=8-1&keywords=michael+behe

No Scientific Journal Support for "How?"

One would think that atheistic scientists who promote evolution would find and trumpet any significant or any slight proof of a testable, repeatable mechanical process that supports their belief. But they have not trumpeted, because they have not found any such process.

If you check the academic writings of past and current scientists to see the "how" of evolution, the results are staggeringly sparse (actually non-existent). In fact, there have been no journals, no books, and no conferences describing the details of how evolutionary changes take place in a complex biochemical system.¹⁹ Evolutionary causes have been *assumed*, but not scientifically *proven*.

So the key points here are: Darwin did not know about the complexity of cells or the fascinating chemical processes going on inside of them. Darwin's standard of disproving macro-evolution has been met many times over, due to irreducible complexity. And no one, even with today's technology, has discovered a way to re-create a single strand of DNA, or even propose and verify a scientific mechanism for any portion of biochemical evolution.

Therefore, our 30,000 foot glance here (but also confirmed by scientists' in-depth research) in the field of biochemistry proves that evolution is "Scientifically Impossible!"

¹⁹ In the respected periodical *The Journal of Molecular Evolution* – most articles concern mathematics and protein sequences. Surveying the last 10 years (at 100 papers a year = 1,000 papers), none, that is *zero* papers, offered a mechanical solution for evolution to *any* physical process or structure.

One more fact-check. From the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, over the last 10 years and 20,000 published articles, 400 pertained to molecular evolution, but none offered a solution. Again, most involved protein sequences and math. Examine any science textbook. There will be no scientific mechanism described, only some version of "and so it adapted..."

Eight

TOSE 6 – Paleontology

In this sixth section we conclude “The Other Side of Evolution” with the record and study of bones (paleontology). Surely the fossil record will provide the theory of macro-evolution with a leg to stand on – or not.

Darwin was convinced that small gradual changes led to evolution and he stated, "There are no jumps in evolution." This meant that fossils discovered in the future (after 1860) would provide evidence for his theory of gradual change from one species to another.

Many Transitional Forms or Big Jumps (That Disappeared)?

To make the point clear in our lecture, we acted out a drama inviting an athletic audience member to jump across an imaginary ditch. First the ditch was 4 feet, then 8, then 15 feet. Finally we asked if anyone could jump a 100-foot ditch (without any stepping stones that all managed to disappear). They got the point. If change is gradual, then the fossil record must back it up, and a leap too big is not scientifically possible.

The fossil record should show clear evidence of all transitional forms of animals from one species to the next. Darwin's theory required "inconceivably great" numbers of transitional forms.

In Darwin's day, transitional forms of fossils were not evident but scientists expected them to be found in the future. Darwin himself questioned the fossil record, "But as by this theory, innumerable transitional forms must have existed why do we not find them embedded in countless numbers in the crust of the earth?"²⁰

Current Results...Vast Missing Links!

So what has been found since then? Of all the fossils unearthed in the world, 99.9% of them have been discovered since 1860. Do you think that within this 99.9% of work that a massive number of

²⁰ Darwin, *Origin of Species*, re-print 1985, p. 205.

transitional forms were found as Darwin expected? Brief answer – not even close!

Today there are about 100,000 fossil species known. Darwin knew only a fraction of these species. But almost all of these fossil species have either been closely related to known forms or are totally unrelated and of a different type.

When invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals appear on the fossil record; each appears FULLY FORMED. The fossil record reveals that there are NO intermediate forms (frequently called “missing links”) between species.²¹

Here we suggest deeper research into various pig-tooth hoaxes, cemented parts of different animals, and retractions by *National Geographic*, etc. Suffice it to say, 150 years later paleontologists are still searching for transitional forms between species, which once again demonstrates that evolution is “Scientifically Impossible!”

While presenting this lecture on our highly logical, engineering campus, students listened with interest. During question/answer time, a student respectfully stood and said, “Excuse me but they found a missing link in north China a few years ago.”

Thankfully we had just “randomly” read an article about this find in Liaoning province. We answered, “I believe you are talking of the fossil in Liaoning province by paleontologist Xing Xu. *National Geographic* celebrated the find and printed a picture of it. Later however, they had to re-tract their article when other scientists realized that the “missing link” was actually two different fossils that had been found near each other and then attached by concrete. So there was no missing link.”²²

The Chinese student calmly answered, “Thank you for your clarification. No further questions. Maybe God does exist.”

Again, realize we had not yet mentioned God. But by the showing the scientific holes in the evolutionary worldview, hearts began to open!

²¹ And if a singular intermediary form is somehow found in future days, remember that Darwin’s theory requires *massive* numbers of intermediaries, showing incremental and progressive changes from one animal kind to another.

²² <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2000/feb/07/features11.g22>. The article describes the story behind the hoax and also brings up the practice known as “compositing.”

Another doctoral student concluded, “I think after the (*The Other Side of Evolution*) lecture, that Darwin’s theory is incorrect. However, I can’t believe there was a Creator. That sounds impossible too. I think maybe we came from outer space!” Okay, so this student didn’t move towards God, but at least there was some openness to think of something else!

These six scientific fields combine to show the flawed foundation on which the edifice of evolution stands. After your friends think through some of the scientific facts they may not have previously considered, it is time to look at another outcome of the evolutionary worldview – its social implications.

Nine

Evolution's Social Consequences

For your friend, perhaps the theory of evolution serves as one of the primary roadblocks to their faith in Christ. Therefore as a good friend and as a follower of Christ, it is our loving duty to raise thoughtful questions, expose dangerous paths, and help remove those types of obstacles.

In a not-too-far logical leap, Darwin's theory of evolution has brought about many social implications. His historical theory (rather than a scientific theory, which can be tested and proven/disproven) has been applied to war, society, and theology with devastating results. Honestly, the great majority of Asian atheists have never combined the perceived "scientific answers" of evolution with the actual historical applications of evolution. The following material can rock the foundations of a worldview.

1. Charles Darwin considered light-skinned Caucasians to be more highly evolved than brown-skinned Asians and Turks, who were obviously "more advanced" than dark-skinned Africans.²³ When we ask our Asian audiences what they think of Darwin's racial conclusion, most have never heard it previously and are shocked. Secondly, they strongly disagree with the conclusions (which we do as well)! When we then share with great passion our opinion of such ludicrous racial ranking, we find great common ground and a sympathetic ear.
2. Hitler used the concept of "survival of the fittest" as the logical backbone of his extermination plan. Most atheists have never put these facts together, but the "Master Race" idea gave scientific validity to the slaughter of millions.²⁴

²³ See Darwin's description of "savage" and "degraded" "lower organisms" in his book *The Descent of Man* (1871). Fellow evolutionist Steven Jay Gould stated, "Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory" (*Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 1977). You may also be interested to research Ota Benga, the central African pygmy who was caged with an orangutan in 1906.

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Darwinism#Nazi_Germany. Additionally, research "Action T4" regarding the elimination of mentally ill and disabled persons.

3. Mao Zedong the founding father of The People's Republic of China and Chairman of the Communist Party of China, considered "Natural Selection" as a rationale for de-selecting (killing off) the weaker members of society in favor of the stronger.²⁵

Please note: With Chinese citizens we are very careful when talking about Chairman Mao since many hold him in high regard, though others can hear a different perspective with some objectivity. In our lectures, we did *not* use this as an example.

4. As mentioned previously, atheistic governments and societies have applied the supposed gradual progress of macro-evolution to conclude that "God does not exist."

These four social applications show direct links between Darwin's evolutionary theory and global racism, the Nazi Holocaust, a rationale for eliminating weaker humans, and creating a faulty rationale to deny God's existence. For some open-minded people, these social applications are enough to make them re-evaluate their worldview. Others, however, need to ponder some of the deeper and more philosophical questions of life, to which we now turn.

²⁵ <http://www.naturalselectionanddarwinism.com/communism.html>. Note that this is not a "balanced" website offering different academic perspectives, but it clearly illustrates many graphic examples that make the point.

Ten

Four Root Questions

The atheistic worldview, like every belief system, leads to the formation of certain core values, and these core values lead to certain behaviors. So rather than “clip the leaves” of behavior, here we look briefly at the “root system” of the atheistic worldview by examining four roots which inform this worldview: Origin, Morality, Purpose, and Hope.

Ravi Zacharias has written a good and thorough philosophical examination of these four topics in his book *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism*. We have seen these four topics provide many jumping-off points for the Good News of Jesus. We will briefly summarize them here. You can more fully reflect upon them and consider how you might use these foundational issues in sharing your faith.

Origin

"Where do we come from?" An atheist cannot answer this question with any certainty. Some posit that life came to earth by a crashing meteor, but that only changes the location of life's supposed source. It still does not answer *how* life came to be in that other place. Others conclude that humans and life as a whole are mere accidents in the universe. From that perspective, a bunch of particles randomly collided over a long, long time and (add some slime and a lightning bolt or two) and *voila* – life sprang forth!

In 1953 scientist Stanley Miller claimed triumph at producing a few amino acids by shooting some electricity (simulating lightning) into a mixture of elements. This experiment supposedly proved the origin of life. However, most of the by-product of the experiment was tar, a toxic substance. Today enough evidence is amassed so that no funding agency will give money for “origin of life” research. Funding agencies know this research will not produce anything noteworthy. Evolutionists have basically given up this case. In its place exists an unsatisfactory answer to the question of life's origin. They can only answer that life is simply an uncaused accident.

Morality

"Who determines right and wrong, honor and shame?" This question the atheist also cannot answer with any certainty. For the atheist, any standard of morality is fictional or at best convenient for the masses. Generally accepted behavior changes from culture to culture. The evolutionary mindset erodes the basis for morality, often producing self-pleasing lifestyles. This erosion is certainly true in more free countries where the government does not place "motherland consciences" in the people. In Europe and North America, atheism certainly erodes morality on multiple fronts.

We are not here trying to be sarcastic, but in a world devoid of God, altruistic acts make no logical sense. Seeking the good of others can simply be seen as foolish (but then again, what is foolish or wise if there is no standard?). At the extreme, anyone who sacrifices his or her life for another is *not* worthy of honor; they just made a choice for themselves – end of discussion.

The evolutionary mindset of "might equals right," "natural selection," and "survival of the fittest" lead to a very dangerous place as each person does whatever he or she wants. Furthermore, any notion of "peace" is basically fearful people huddling together and coordinating themselves in an effort to survive longer, while realistically waiting to be overpowered by the mighty.

Purpose

"What is the meaning of life, and why are we here?" These profound questions the atheist also cannot answer. Our Chinese university students usually offered the following options: 1. For my Motherland. 2 For my parents. 3. To make money. But the true atheistic worldview believes that national loyalty and family loyalty are only convenient alliances based on temporary relationships. Sure, these pursuits might provide comfort and sustain a longer life by belonging to a group, but they hold no long-term meaning.

The logical conclusion of a world devoid of God is that... life has no purpose. If our origin is truly an accident and if ultimate justice will never come, then any purpose we embrace is for ourselves only. If what we see here and now is all that exists, then existence as a

whole is ultimately meaningless. Anyone who seeks to live with meaning is simply looking for pleasurable distraction along the way. Random chance means that some get lucky, while others don't, but it's all by chance, not design.

As an avowed atheist, the British philosopher Bertrand Russell stated that because life has no purpose, we should put our wholehearted trust in "the firm foundation of unyielding despair." Russell took his belief to its logical conclusion.

Interestingly, some people like Russell who subscribe to the atheistic worldview seek to inform other people about it. But why? Is their persuasion because they care for others and want to keep people from error? If life has no purpose, then what motivates Russell to communicate that "fact" that life has no purpose? What benefit does he derive?

It also seems ironic that an atheist uses words (spoken or written) to communicate that "life has no meaning." If life has no meaning, do languages and sentences have meaning? Or is the meaning found in conveying a message through language simply an illusion? Is this very sentence just a bunch of jibberish? Might not the fact that language carries meaning signify that meaning *can* be found in other aspects of life, and even in the universe?

Hope

"What happens after we die?" Again, the atheist cannot answer with any certainty. As far as an afterlife, atheism offers no hope. Your friend may say, "This life is all we have, and then – nothingness." But how does he/she know? What proof do they have? This line of questioning should at least move the atheist to agnosticism, recognizing that they simply do not know.

Among the Asian atheists we have asked about their views of the afterlife, we have received a variety of responses. Most are not firm supporters of "eternal nothingness," because really, who wants that?! Some admit they don't know. Sometimes they become afraid, sometimes defiant, sometimes flippant, and sometimes sad. We find it interesting to see how the looming end-of-life question provokes different reactions.

Atheism provides no answer and no hope after death. Rather it promotes a hopeless eternity. The real questions dangle without resolution. When speaking to our students about what happens after life, many laugh nervously. Some indicate that thoughts about dying give them fear.

The lack of scientific evidence once again shows that atheism is a type of faith system, just without the hope! Sometimes after much relationship and many conversations, we point out that to believe that no god exists also requires faith. Atheism is a religion itself. Startled, some students laugh a little and then say, "Wow, I guess it is."

The true atheist believes that they *originate* as an accident, that *moral standards* are only cultural suggestions, that life has *no purpose* except as a pacifying illusion, and that at *death* they hopelessly cease to exist.

How vastly different the Christian worldview stands apart from the sad answers to which the atheist clings. Our origin comes by God's intent and design, with each person known and loved by an intimate Creator. The standards of right and wrong, honor and shame do not depend on the whim of the ruling class or the morality of the masses, or the power of the strong. Rather God's own character determines what is just and true and good.

Additionally, God's strong mission and meaning is bestowed to those created in his image as we seek to live out and promote his kingdom and his standards throughout the entire world. Finally, eternity holds no fear for those whose hope resides in the resurrected Christ. Through Christ, despair can be gone!

Eleven

Pride

We noticed a trend when we listen to Chinese Christians share their testimonies with us. Almost all of them (many university students) share at some point, "I used to be a proud girl/boy, but then I became a Christian."

This statement reveals one of the strongholds from which they have escaped or overcome.

For many atheists from China (and probably other nations), pride serves as a major hurdle to faith in Christ. Throughout their lives, they were taught that only "the weak need a crutch." Therefore, weak people need God. These sentiments push them to grow in self-reliance and confidence or at least to hide behind it. Some share a patronizing attitude towards those who "need God" while others show a dismissive or prideful disdain toward the idea that God exists. They may use words like "irrelevant" or "petty" or "non-scientific."

The Bible states that "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall," (Prov. 16:18). Pray for your friends to be willing to humble themselves and admit their need for God. This step is so very hard for a Chinese atheist who has been taught to save face.

Circles of Knowledge

When sharing our faith, we try to speak simple English to people learning English. We often use paper to draw illustrations to help us explain our points. One of our favorite illustrations causes us all to laugh and helps provoke a little humility. On a piece of paper we draw a big circle.

Then we say, "That circle represents the knowledge in the entire world. It includes all languages, history, science, literature, politics, technology, everything. Now, who in the history of the world is the smartest person you know?"

Many here will say Einstein or some other figure. (Most Chinese university students said Einstein).

“Ok, great. So say that person has a certain amount of knowledge. Draw a circle representing that person’s knowledge of the entire world.” The person now draws the “Einstein” circle.

Note: A very high number would be 10% of all that this person could know.

“Thanks. Now I want you to draw another a circle representing *your* knowledge of all that can be known in the world.”

Their circle will obviously be smaller than the smartest person they know. Now that the three-circle diagram is drawn, it is time to help them proceed to a fun conclusion. (Many students giggle at this as they know their circle will be much smaller than Einstein’s.)

“So if Einstein (or whoever) knows 10%, what percentage do you know? It looks like maybe 5% (or 2%) of the entire world’s knowledge... Right?... So here is the question. Since you just described the fact that you know 5% of all that can be known, that leaves 95% of the world’s knowledge out there that is currently unknown to you. Correct?... Could God exist somewhere in that 95%?”

This one illustration can begin to move people from atheism, where they say with prideful certainty that God does not exist, to the possibility that God could exist, but just outside of their knowledge.

Have fun with this! We have done this illustration with many students. Often, it ends with them saying, “Well yeah, but since man came from monkeys God does not exist.” It was hearing this response to our illustration over and over that helped us conclude evolution was a stronghold on our campus.

Pride Seeks a Bible

Interestingly, you can also use a person’s pride to help open a door for the Gospel, if they allow it. At times we have actually appealed to a person’s sense of pride when offering them a Bible. When students visit our home, we always display a Bible on a table that numerous students would notice and touch. From there, our conversation starts something like this:

- “Have you read the world’s most printed book? You know more than 5 billion copies have been printed.”

- “All educated people should have a copy of the world’s most analyzed and thought-provoking book. Do you have one?”
- “If you could find a copy of the most read book in the history of the world, would you read it?”
- “If you could get your hands on the book that has sold more copies than any other book every single year since 1815, would you want one?”

Usually that type of question invites an easy response, and if we are in a position to give a Bible we do so. While living in China, we often asked the person to pay a small price (this protected us from the accusation of proselytizing so we could keep our job). Their follow through also helped us to understand their interest level.²⁶

Emperor Qin and the Afterlife

Another tactic that we found useful on our university campus was to talk about the first emperor of China.²⁷ Qin Shi Huang, the first Chinese emperor to unite the different warring factions, had a



fascinating perspective on the afterlife. He commissioned the sculpting of the entire Terracotta Army (at least 8,000 hand-carved warriors) to accompany him after he died. Emperor Qin spent decades of time, invested lavish expenses, and exerted much thought to prepare for the afterlife.

Your friend, at least the Chinese ones, will know Emperor Qin which leads to some easy questions.

“So, do you think Emperor Qin was wise or foolish to prepare for the afterlife? Was it just a big waste?” These questions challenged them.

²⁶ Another very good resource we have used in addition to the Bible is *Song of a Wanderer: Beckoned by Eternity* by Li Cheng. The book is written for an educated Chinese audience and can be found in print and downloadable online versions in Mandarin and English. Published originally in Chinese under the title *Youzi Yin*.

²⁷ For those with friends from other atheistic nations, you may know of other examples of a historic leader that prepared for the afterlife, or a person’s final words, or other illustrations. May the examples here serve to stimulate thought.

Then, we'd say, "Do you know more than Emperor Qin? If he spent years and years thinking about life after death, don't you think it is a good idea to at least consider what that might mean for you?"

These illustrations represent just a few ways to engage your friends in conversation. Remember it is not your wise questions or clever drawings that will bring peace in their hearts. Pray the Holy Spirit will draw them to himself!

Twelve

History of Christianity

This brief section can help you understand another objection your friend may have regarding the Gospel and Christianity in general. Here we will focus on China, but the sentiment may hold true for atheists from other nations as well who see Christianity as a colonial threat.

Three Key Groups

Did you know that the Gospel arrived in China before it came to the West?

- In 645 AD the **Nestorians** brought the Gospel to China along the Silk Road, arriving in the city of Xi'an (famous for the terracotta soldiers). For over 600 years, the Nestorians were the only Christian Church in China. They did not, however, preach an evangelistic message, and they had some rather non-orthodox beliefs.
- The **Roman Catholics** arrived in China in 1294, but completely missed the opportunity to evangelize Kublai Khan and his Yuan Empire, who had invited them to share their religious insights with him and many others.
- The **Jesuits** arrived in 1579 in Macau and had a degree of success spreading the Gospel in the port areas of South China.

It is good to know those three small sections of a historical overview – Nestorians, Roman Catholics, and Jesuits.

Boatloads of Trouble

To this day, many Chinese believe Christianity is a “foreign religion.” Here is the reason. The Chinese link Christianity not to the Nestorians nor to the Catholics, but to the British imperialists. By 1836 the British East India Company had brought over 3.6 million kilograms of opium to China. When the Chinese government refused to allow opium to be imported, British warships intervened and basically held hostage certain Chinese port cities. In this way, the

British and other Western powers gained control over numerous port cities of southern China and other Asian nations. These treaties became known as the “Unequal Treaties” and signified a “Century of Humiliation” for the Chinese nation. For a culture that desires to save face, this shame deeply impacted the nation.

But that is not all. On the same naval gunboats supporting the opium trade arrived many Protestant missionaries. Therefore, in the Chinese mind, they were all linked together: guns, drugs, and missionaries. Not a pretty picture, and not an honorable entry into a nation!²⁸ Of course at that time, travel options were limited for overseas missionaries.



When discussing the history of Christianity with Chinese friends, we shake our heads at the Unequal Treaties, which were indeed shameful and wrong. Yet we also bring up the fact that Christianity existed in China through the Nestorians and others long before it came to the U.S. Many Asians are also happy to know that Jesus was himself from Asia, not from Europe or the U.S. We use these historical facts to attempt to bridge any cultural animosity and build common ground.

²⁸ Additional study will show the great advances in education, medicine, business, agriculture, and social welfare brought by the missionaries to China and many other nations. Though the colonizing idea remains, many missionaries accomplished great amounts of good and blessed many people! We love knowing that we will someday meet these fascinating and courageous people who sacrificed so much to share the Gospel.

Thirteen

Honor for Ancestors vs. Honor for Jesus

For those of us from the West, one of the trickiest aspects to understand about Asian culture concerns the veneration of ancestors. Undoubtedly we learn to respect our parents and grandparents in the West. But how many generations can you name (unless you diligently researched for a school project)? The cultural gap remains wide between East and West with regard to the older generations.

Asian atheists revere their ancestors even if they do not consider them as gods, but what about Asian *Christians*? Particularly, how do they reconcile the fact that they may be first-generation Christians, but their ancestors either never heard of Jesus, or possibly resisted the Gospel?

How Asian Christians think about and honor their ancestors could provide a powerful and interesting study that goes beyond the scope of this eBook. Does their acceptance of Christ mean they disrespect their ancestors? Do they think they know more than those who came before them? Or how can they participate in honoring their ancestors with non-believing family members without breaking their vows to Jesus? It can create very practical and sometimes sticky situations (much like the Apostle Paul who addressed culture-specific issues in his letters to specific churches!)

While some modern Asians consider veneration of ancestors as superstition, there is usually some degree of great respect (and possibly even fear if they are wrong about the “superstition.”)²⁹ Ancestor worship involves the belief that the souls of ancestors watch over or require worship from their descendants. Often the oldest son is responsible to lead the family in worship or offerings to the deceased. Altars with incense, food, flowers, etc. are the focal point of many homes. In many areas today, ancestor worship takes the form of high respect and honor for the elderly or deceased.

²⁹ Interestingly Chairman Mao’s body was mummified and remains on display at his mausoleum in Tiananmen Square to this day, allowing people to come and see/honor/worship him.

Paula's grandfather died 5 years before we met her. When she was young, her grandfather cared for her and encouraged her to do her best. His last words to her were, "Be useful to society." Paula wanted to obey and honor her grandfather who was a devout Marxist and atheist. After she studied the Bible with us for a few months Paula realized she had a decision to make. She concluded, "If I accept Jesus, I am saying my grandfather was wrong." She continued, "I believe Jesus is right. But I think I would rather not receive Him and be where my grandfather is. I love my grandfather and can't imagine going to any place without him."

So what can you say to those who want to honor their ancestors who died but did not know Jesus?

For this kind of sticky answer, we turned to our local Chinese Christian friends to hear what they say in this situation. Thankfully we found a wealth of wisdom. One of the best types of answers framed a response in terms of the deceased loved one speaking.

"If your grandfather (or whoever) could see you now they would tell you this..."

1. "The best way to honor me by following Jesus."
2. Or "If you truly love me and want to please me, then follow Jesus."
3. Or "If I could choose today to follow Jesus, I would. So now I want you to follow him."

These types of gentle and sensitive sentences reach to the heart of the matter without speaking of the biblical realities (and the unknowns) of those who have passed away apart from Christ. Certainly, anyone who has died would offer such advice to loved ones.

Conclusion

Praise God that your friends have you to share the Good News about Jesus, forgiveness and hope and purpose through God. Their lives need not be full of despair with only an illusion of meaning. They are not accidents in the universe. They are designed, they are known, and they are loved! Indeed, only the sick need a doctor (and we are all sick), only the cripple need a crutch (and we are all broken), and only sinners need a savior (and we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory.)

For an Asian atheist to accept Christ they must first "lose face." They must humble themselves and realize that they need Jesus to save them and guide them as Lord. But by God's grace "losing face" means saving their whole selves when they receive the forgiveness Jesus offers.

Your loving actions, your clear testimony, your clean lifestyle, and your fearless friendship will open many doors. And as you pray for your atheist friends, the Holy Spirit will move – dissolving the objections, removing the obstacles, and revealing the magnificent and loving character of God in order to draw them to himself.

May God bless your efforts to engage your friends with kindness and compassion. May your witness bear much fruit that will last!

About the Authors



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