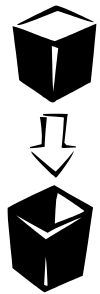


## Building Belief ... *one block at a time*

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I was standing in line at a local coffee shop recently, ordering my favorite brew, when I overheard two young guys talking about Christianity. One of them, I quickly discerned, was a Christian and the other one was a Buddhist. As the Christian was sharing his faith, the other guy retorted, “**Why do you have to tell me you’re right and I’m wrong? Why can’t we just all be right?**” It seems nicer to believe that everyone is right, that we are all on the same mountain, just taking different paths to the peak. I hear this kind of relativistic thinking over and over, sometimes even from Christians.

**How do we respond to a postmodern, pluralistic culture such as ours?** In what follows, I’ll briefly sketch six building blocks of belief that are fundamental for sharing the Good News these days. There is a flow to them, with each block building on the earlier ones and with each step narrowing the possible options until they culminate at the top – the Gospel of Christ. They begin with the most fundamental of issues – truth.

### **Building block #1 – Truth**

One of the pillars of postmodern thinking is that we can each have our own truth. Whether we’re referring to moral issues, religious issues, or just about any other issue, a majority of people now believe that truth is relative. This makes it nearly impossible for us to share our faith with them. The example of the Christian/Buddhist discussion above is a case in point.

Back in the good ol’ days, everyone basically believed that there was such a thing as objective truth. We can no longer take this for granted – not today. As the research of Barna and Gallup demonstrates, **relativism now reigns**, and we must respond decisively by proving that truth is absolute and not relative before we can make effective headway in sharing the “truth” about Christ with others.

### **Building block #2 – Worldviews**

After we establish the fact that truth is absolute, the next question that naturally arises is: “What then is the truth?” At this point, rather than examining all of the different religions (for they are many), it’s better to look at a much broader concept – worldview. A worldview is simply the way we look at the world; it’s the lens through which we see reality. Defined broadly enough, there aren’t very many options available. Actually, we can boil them down to three, and only three: **theism**, which is the belief in the existence of God or the gods; **atheism**, which is the denial of the existence of God; and **pantheism**, which is the view that God is all and all is one.

Interestingly, when you study the history of thought, you see that these same three worldviews keep emerging, century after century, culture after culture, in one form or another. But every religion and every ideology that has ever existed fits into one of these three (e.g., Zen Buddhism is atheistic; Hinduism is pantheistic; Islam is theistic, etc.). And it’s **much easier to examine three worldviews** than to examine countless religions. Furthermore, when you examine the evidence for each of the worldviews – the scientific, philosophical, and experiential evidence – the theistic worldview wins hands down. In discussions with seekers, I encourage them to carefully look at the evidence for each of these worldviews, not just the theistic one. There is nothing to fear in doing this and much to gain.

### **Building block #3 – Evidence for God**

Once we compare the three worldviews and see that theism stands out as the most reasonable, we can go on to strengthen our belief in God by investigating recent and powerful evidence for his existence. In the realms of physics, microbiology, and cosmology, for example, there is now more scientific support for a **Grand Designer** of the universe than ever in recorded history. This evidence is so persuasive, in fact, that one of the most recognized and prolific atheistic philosophers of the 20th century – Antony Flew – now believes in God because of it. Some of this material is complex, but much is not. With just a little study, anyone can easily see how science is now on the side of God, for his fingerprints are all over the cosmos.

### **Building block #4 – The Bible**

Having seen the incredible evidence for God's existence, we've narrowed the field considerably. But we still haven't reached the Christian faith, for there are different kinds of theism, including the three central theistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. So how do we go about demonstrating that Christianity is the true theistic religion?

Here the Bible plays a central role, and there are several kinds of evidence for both its reliability and its divine inspiration. In terms of **reliability**, recent archaeological discoveries continue to confirm its people and events. Regarding its **inspiration**, one of the most powerful evidences is Old Testament prophetic claims that are fulfilled in the New Testament. There are dozens of such passages, and what is so amazing is the breadth and specificity of many of them. Not only do they demonstrate that a divine Mind must have been involved, but they also prove that Jesus was the Messiah that the Old Testament predicted, thus nullifying a Judaism, which denies Jesus. They show that Islam, which also denies Jesus' messianic claims, must be false as well. This leaves us with Christianity as the most reasonable of the three.

### **Building block #5 – Jesus' resurrection**

So far, we've concluded, we've helped the seeker conclude that the Bible is the Word of God and that Christianity is true. Yet there is even more support for its veracity. There are historical facts related to the death and resurrection of Jesus that even the most critical scholars now agree on. With these facts in hand, the most reasonable explanation for them is that Jesus **really did miraculously rise** from the dead. Given what most scholars now believe, there are simply no good naturalistic explanations to account for these facts taken as a whole. Muhammad never did anything like this. The Buddha never did anything like this. As a matter of fact, no one else has ever done anything like this. You would be hard pressed to find any better confirmed event in ancient history than these facts relating to Jesus' resurrection, and you won't find another religion that offers this kind of support for its being true.

### **Building Block #6 – The Gospel**

Once we've established each of these truths, we are now in a solid place to share the final block – the Good News of salvation through trusting in Christ. And it is good news – Jesus himself invites us to live an eternal kind of life in the Kingdom of God, which begins at conversion and continues on forever. It is here that God transforms us from the inside out, and we can begin to live the good life, exhibiting the Fruit of the Spirit, and shining brightly in our world.

God has given us **compelling evidence for our faith**, and the case for Christianity is stronger than ever. It's up to us to take these building blocks of belief and use them to **advance his Kingdom** on earth.