

Q: What is the best argument for not believing in God?

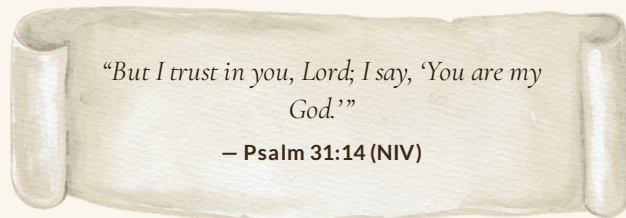
For most of my life, when asked, “Do you believe in God?” I reflexively answered, “Yes.”

But to be honest, I'd never really sat down and thought about it. I said yes because I was raised Catholic, and that meant I believed in God.

And I never stopped to question it.

Of course I believed in God.

Didn't I?



Anthropologists have long observed that belief in something beyond the visible world appears in some form across nearly every known human culture. We seem to want, or even need, to believe in something.

Shared belief is how we come together, align in purpose, and cooperate to achieve almost unimaginable things.

Perhaps it is easier to believe in something as a group than it is to believe it alone. (A *subject for another day.*)

But what we are asking here is ... what is the best reason **not** to believe?

But when I finally and purposefully sat down and asked myself that same question, the answer did not make itself known. The answer only became more questions. Then more questions on top of that.

Who is God?

Where is God?

Does this God know me?

What does it mean to believe?

How do I know if I believe?

A WORD ON THE WORD

The Hebrew *mistattēr* (mis-tat-TAIR) is a reflexive form of the verb whose root (s-t-r) means “to hide” or “to conceal.” It does not describe a God who is missing, but a God who is actively hiding Himself. Absence requires no person. Hiding requires someone present, choosing when to be found. “*Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself*” (Isaiah 45:15, NIV). Jewish tradition has a name for this hiddenness, drawn from Deuteronomy 31:18: *hester panim* (HESS-ter pah-NEEM), “the hiding of the face.” The Bible does not dodge the silence of God. It names it as a core facet of belief.

There are many reasons not to believe. Some of the strongest arguments are:

- There's no evidence that God exists. I need proof. Why would I believe in something that can't be proven to exist?
- An all-powerful, all-loving God would not allow such extreme levels of evil, cruelty, and suffering in the world.
- When I needed Him most, and reached out in prayer, there was no answer. He was not there.
- It's all invented — a bunch of stories to make us feel important, or to fill in the gaps in our knowledge that science has not yet answered.
- We are all born with an innate sense of morality, right and wrong. Why do we need God?
- I have studied all the world's religions and they're all pretty much the same. Pick one and be kind.

Each deserves a serious hearing. What makes the God of the Bible any different from the great stories of Greek mythology, or the colorful creation stories of ancient Egypt?

Then there are quicker responses — less arguments than reactions, often born of real experience:

- No intelligent person I know believes in God.
- Religious leaders are all hypocrites.
- I don't need to worship anything.
- Where are all the modern miracles?
- Religion is a cult.

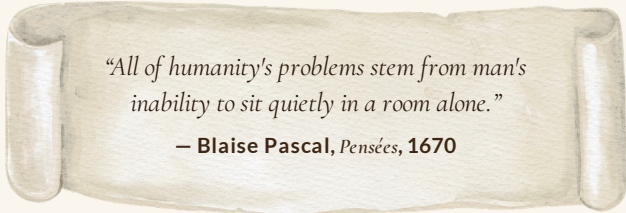
In my experience, responses to the question — *Do I believe in God?* — tend to fall into four buckets:

- I've never really thought about it. *I lived in this one for most of my life.*
- Of course I believe in God. *Reflexively affirmed, without doing any real work.*
- I'll deal with eternity one day, but for now I have bigger things on my plate.
- I don't know, but I wrestle with the question a lot.

Those who wrestle long enough tend to land in one of two places. Or keep wrestling:

“No. I've decided I don't believe.” This group has done the work and arrived at unbelief.

“YES. YES. YES. I do believe.” Though I confess, I don't always know Him, and don't always know exactly why.



“All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”

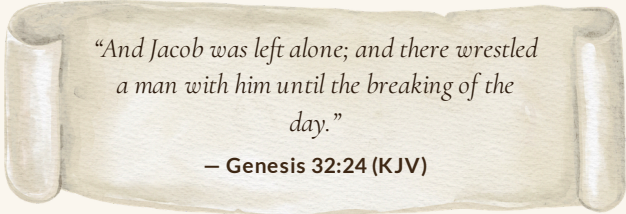
— Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 1670

To me, the most convincing argument isn't on either list. It isn't an argument at all.

I'm afraid. I fear what I might encounter if I attempt to discover what I truly believe.

There is nothing quite like it. No parallel to lean on.

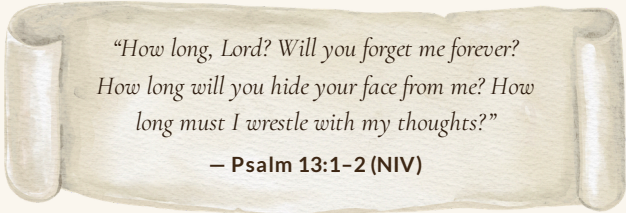
It's just you and God.



"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

— Genesis 32:24 (KJV)

Honestly confronting belief is an experience made all the more isolating by a God who remains hidden, refusing to speak.



*"How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me? How
long must I wrestle with my thoughts?"*

— Psalm 13:1-2 (NIV)

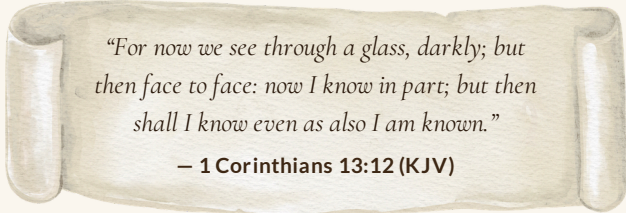
But God does speak. He has spoken through the Psalms, the prophets, the apostles, and through the teaching, life, death, and resurrection of His Son. He has given us His word to study and understand.

Yet even studied diligently over a lifetime, His word offers no proof. Not the kind we demand, anyway.

Can we ever truly know?

Has anyone ever lived free from doubt?

Can we believe even though we may never know beyond a doubt?

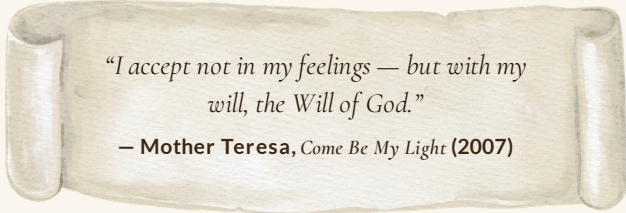


*"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but
then face to face: now I know in part; but then
shall I know even as also I am known."*

— 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV)

In a book of private letters published after her death, Mother Teresa revealed that for nearly fifty years she experienced an extraordinary absence of any felt sense of God — a silence she confided only to her spiritual directors, and repeatedly begged them to burn.

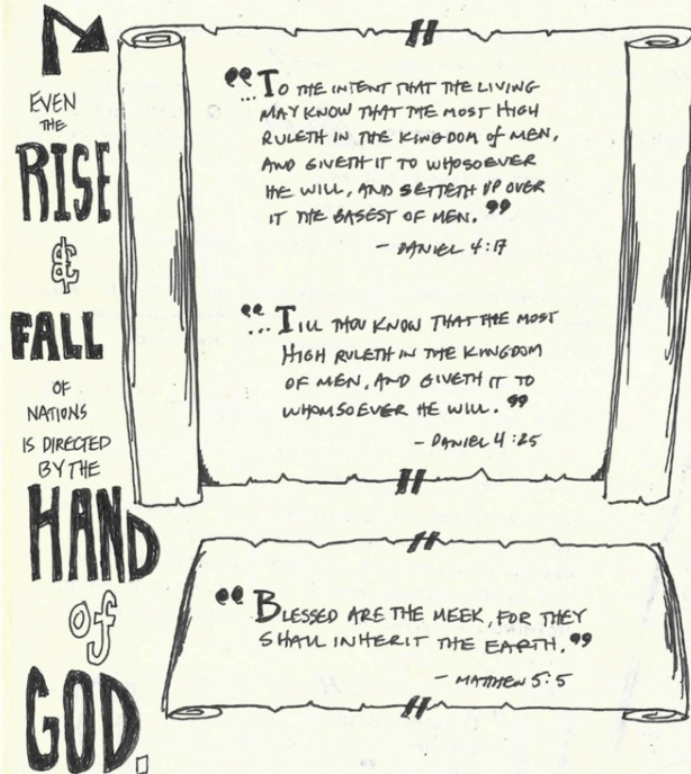
And yet, she chose to believe He was there.



*"I accept not in my feelings — but with my
will, the Will of God."*

— Mother Teresa, *Come Be My Light* (2007)

The Journal



def: maek - 1. mild of temper, not easily provoked or irritated, yielding

def: refractory - sullen or perverse in opposition

def: sullen - gloomily angry and silent; cross, sour, ill-humored

def: peevish - fretful, petulant, apt to mutter

THIS! { 2. Appropriately humble, in an evangelical sense; submissive to the divine will; not proud, self-sufficient or refractory; not peevish and apt to complain of divine dispensations.

↳ meek does NOT mean cowering or passive or willing to take any abuse from another

"TWO MEN STARE OUT ~~THROUGH~~ THROUGH PRISON BARS, ONE SAW MUD, THE OTHER STARS."

- DALE CARNEGIE

Q. IS IT WRONG, A SIGN OF WEAKNESS, A LACK OF FAITH, A DEARTH OF COURAGE, A GROSS IMMATURITY, A RESISTANCE TO COMMITMENT, A LIMITED CAPACITY FOR UNDERSTANDING, OR SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER - IGNORANCE, CHURLISHNESS, HARDNESS, RESTLESSNESS ..., TO STILL NOT KNOW WHAT I TRULY BELIEVE?

↳ THE ONE THING I DO BELIEVE IS...

I BELIEVE in GOD.

[THE REST IS ALL STILL BEING HOTLY DEBATED.]