

TOPIC 2.5**IF THERE IS A GOD, IT
CHANGES EVERYTHING. FACT
OR FICTION?****Conversation Points**

- ★ I would like to make a lot of money so that I can do something good with it.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ I have a set of life goals that will be easy for me to achieve.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ I have one annoying habit I would really like to change.
AGREE or DISAGREE?

Reflection

Sean's father, Josh, had become an internationally renowned Christian apologist. Over twenty-million copies of his books had been sold, with one of them regarded as one of the most influential Christian books of all time. While his father travelled the world speaking to large gatherings about the evidences for God, the truthfulness of the Bible and Christianity, at home there was problem. Sean was now a teenager and he was in turmoil. But how he could he tell his father that he was now struggling to believe what his father had told tens of millions of people around the world that *they* should believe? Sean was torn. If he announced that he did not believe that God, the Bible, or Christianity was true, how could he face his father with the enormous shame he would bring him?

But the turmoil became too great for Sean. One night at dinner when his dad was home (and not away on a speaking tour of American universities) he asked his father if he could speak openly.

“Sure son” his dad replied.

“I don’t know if I believe what you believe Dad” Sean announced.

What happened next stunned Sean.

“That’s great Sean. I know that you will have to go on your own journey of discovery of the truth” Josh told his son.

And with that, Sean did embark on his own journey of investigation to decide for himself what was true and what he should believe. Without any pressure from his dad, Sean studied other religions and philosophies and even the claims of atheists. Over time he found that the claims of other religions were often illogical, inconsistent, unverifiable, incompatible with science and the historical record, and contradictory. On the other hand, and perhaps to his surprise, he found that the claims of Christianity grounded as they were in the Bible were logical, consistent, verifiable, compatible with science and the historical record, and while *seemingly* paradoxical, were not contradictory.

Sean discovered for himself that the central claim of Christianity and its ancient creeds — that Jesus Christ of Nazareth lived, died, was resurrected, ascended back to the Father, and sent the Holy Spirit to abide with all who turn to Him as Saviour — was not only verifiable historically, but was also experientially transformative! In the years that followed, Sean asked his dad if they could together revise one of his father’s earliest books, *Evidence The Demands a Verdict*. This was published in 2017. Today, Sean McDowell Ph.D., is an associate professor of apologetics at Biola University in Los Angeles.



Josh McDowell with his son, Sean.

Truth does not seem to mind being scrutinised. In fact, scrutiny - investigating whether something is true or not - seems to be invited by truth claims and discouraged by false claims. **What might Sean McDowell had been obliged to do if his scrutiny of Christianity proved that that it was be false?**

My ultimate problem wasn't intellectual—it was emotional. I had bitterness and hatred for my father because he was an alcoholic and destroyed my family. In addition, the sexual abuse I experienced for seven years by Wayne Bailey just compounded the hurt. Given my father's failures it brought me no joy to hear that a heavenly Father supposedly loved me. Every time someone mentioned a "heavenly Father", it didn't bring joy—it brought pain.

JOSH MCDOWELL

Evidence That Demands a Verdict, xxiii

The relationship between whether someone holds a true view about God or not and how they then understand their own life

Does it make any difference what someone believes about God? It was Augustine who said that *all people have a God-shaped hole in their heart that people try to fill with things that just can not fill it*. He concluded in his book, *Confessions*, that *our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You [God]*. This God-shaped hole leads all people to be *r _ _ _ _ _ s* in one way or another - even those who claim not to be religious! Religious fervour about things other than God is evident everywhere: political causes, environmentalism, professional sport, entertainment, and so on. But it also can be seen in those professing religious beliefs about their god that leads to what is often labelled as *religious fundamentalism*.

In some parts of the world this leads to military conflict and death - to anyone who disagrees with their particular beliefs. At the core of this flagrant disregarding for human life is a false concept about God. Just as all human beings are *religious*, all human beings *worship*. It is one of the things that defines *what it means to be human*. It has been said and observed that we become like what we *w _ _ _ _ _ p*. The writer of Second Kings denounced those who had abandoned God and went after false gods. He wrote: *"they went after false idols and became false"* (2Kings 17:15). If someone worships a hateful angry god it will inevitably lead to them emulating (imitating) this attitude.

But for the person who knows that God is both loving and holy, who has created all people in His image thus investing in all people with inherent dignity and worth, and expects His worshipers to also *be* loving and holy and to treat all people with love and respect.

Despite what people think, it wasn't the evidence that brought me to Christ. What brought me to Christ was an understanding of the love of God. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."

JOSH MCDOWELL

Evidence That Demands a Verdict, xxiii

From the Bible

1. In Romans 1:19-21 it states that it is possible for all people to know the truth about God. How does this passage state that it is possible?

2. What does the Bible state that God has written on the hearts of all people (Rom. 2:14-15)

3. What difference does worshiping the true God make to an individual and then society as a whole? Consider how our society might be different we each lived out Colossians 3:8-15. Discuss.

4. If you have become a Christian, how has your life positively changed since then - and in particular, how has it impacted how you handle life's difficulties?

Additional References

McDowell Josh and Sean McDowell. 2017. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict. Life-changing truth for a sceptical world.* Bletchley, Milton Keynes: UK.