Stoa Apologetics Preparation for Monument Members

Season 22 Monument Release #7



Directions: Work through the source material in this download to help you understand this week’s selection of apologetics prompts. This release addresses approximately 5% of the total number of prompts you will need to be prepared for in your next tournament, so keep up the studying from week to week to ensure your knowledge in Apologetics. This week’s prompts are:

**Category 4: God and Man (Part 1)**

1. Does God reveal Himself to man? And if so, how?
2. What does it mean to be holy? Why is this important?\*
3. How can God be both merciful and just?
4. Can morality exist without God?
5. What do secular theories of human origins get right and wrong about human nature?\*
6. How could a loving God send man to Hell?
7. Explain what is meant by the statement, “God hates the sin but loves the sinner.”

\*This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. A worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

For a list of all the prompts for the year and all other downloads for NCFCA apologetics, visit your download page at <https://club.monumentmembers.com/stoa-apologetics/download-category/stoa-apologetics>.

God Revealing Himself to Man[[1]](#footnote-1)\* *by Benjamin Vincent*

Does God reveal Himself to man? And if so, how?

Bible Verses

Hebrews 1:1-2

2 Timothy 3:16

John 1:1-18

Romans 1:19-20

Psalm 19:1-2

1 Corinthians 2:6-12

Romans 2:14-15

Quotations

“God is the highest source of information about himself…if there was a higher source of information about God, then God wouldn’t be God…it is important that any study of God look at what God says about himself.” (Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Beliefs*)

“Our world is bombarded with ideas… ideas such as “All roads lead to Rome” and “There is no one way” come from every corner of the globe. Relativism has taken over, disavowing all possibility of one truth source; postmodernism has arrived, bringing its elastic morality; secularism joins in exalting existential experience. By contrast, God the Creator has revealed himself—unmasked himself, as we would to a friend.” (Paul E. Little, *Know What You Believe*)

“God has chosen to show himself to us in a number of ways. Most obviously, God can be seen as a superb artist in the magnificence of our created world and the complexity of our physical bodies…I marvel at the structure of my thumb and fingers, telling me Someone ingenious designed them. God [also] revealed himself specifically to the writers of the Bible. He unveiled his character and his will for them.” (Paul E. Little, *Know Who You Believe*)

Recommendations

https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\_stewart/don\_stewart\_293.cfm

*How Has God Revealed Himself To Humanity?* by Don Stewart

*Know What You Believe* by Paul E. Little, Pages 17-19

*Know Who You Believe* by Paul E. Little, Pages 23-24

*Systematic Theology* by Wayne A. Grudem, Chapter 10

Commentary

In Lewis Carroll’s famed work *Alice in Wonderland*, one of the most intriguing characters is the Cheshire Cat. This strange feline has the ability to appear and disappear at will, even making parts of his body visible while others remain unseen. When Alice attempts to search for the Cheshire Cat, she comes to realize that searching for him is useless, because he can never be found unless he wants to be found; he can never be seen unless he chooses to make himself seen.

Mankind is in a similar situation when it comes to the existence of nature of God. Because we are finite beings and God is, by definition, infinite, we cannot find God ourselves. We can only discover about God that which He chooses to show us. If God never chooses to reveal certain truths to us, then we will never discover those truths.

As Christians, it’s important that we understand how we know what we know about God. How has God chosen to reveal Himself to us? As professor and theologian Wayne Grudem put it, “God is the highest source of information about himself… If there was a higher source of information about God, then God wouldn’t be God.” If we want to learn about God, we have to look at what God says about himself. So where do we look? In what ways has God chosen to reveal Himself to us?

Traditionally, God’s revelation to mankind is divided into two categories: *general revelation* and *specific revelation.* General revelation refers to that which all people can observe about God from what He has done. Specific revelation refers to the detailed truths that God reveals about Himself to people for the specific purpose of revealing His nature. These two categories can be further divided into four primary ways that God reveals Himself: *Nature, Human Conscience, Jesus Christ,* and *The Bible*. Nature and Human Conscience are both forms of general revelation; we see God through His work in nature and in our consciences. Jesus Christ and the Bible are forms of specific revelation; Jesus specifically revealed God’s nature to us by embodying His nature in human form, while the Bible, being the literal, inspired Word of God, reveals His nature and will to us in written form. When addressing this topic in a speech, it’s best to touch on all four of these forms of revelation.

God reveals Himself through Nature because all of creation points to its creator. Verses like Psalm 19:1-2 and Romans 1:19-20 talk about how creation reveals God. Not only does the existence of creation reveal the existence of the Creator; the nature of creation also reveals a bit about the nature of the Creator. For example, when we look at the universe, we see that it is an orderly universe. Laws of motion and logic and mathematics govern the cosmos; carefully structured body systems allow life to function on earth. God is revealed as a God of order and design because nature is orderly and carefully designed.

God also reveals Himself through the human conscience. As Romans 2:14-15 states, the laws of morality are written on the hearts of mankind. All people have an internal sense of what is right and what is wrong. The presence of inherent moral law in the consciences of human beings point to the moral law-giver—God. This also falls under general revelation because all human beings are aware of an internal sense of right and wrong; thus, God is generally revealed to all people through their own inherent moral compass, or conscience.

God also reveals Himself specifically through Jesus Christ and through the Bible. As John 1:14 states, Jesus is God Himself manifested in human form. Thus, the person of Christ reveals much about God. The actions and words of Jesus tell us who God is, what He is like, and how we can know Him. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that Jesus is the ultimate expression of God’s revelation to mankind.

Finally, God reveals Himself to us specifically through His Word, the Bible. By using human authors to write His own words, God was able to communicate with us directly. When we read the words of Scripture, we are reading a letter sent directly from God to us.

Ultimately, we can see that God has revealed Himself to mankind in four primary ways: Nature, Human Conscience, Jesus Christ, and the Bible.

Holiness

What does it mean to be holy? Why is this important?

This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. This worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

God as Merciful and Just *by Maggie Topper*

How can God be both merciful and just?

Bible Verses

[Hebrews 8:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+8%3A12&version=NIV)

[1 John 1:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3A9&version=NIV)

[Titus 3:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Titus+3%3A5&version=NIV)

[Romans 4:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+4%3A25&version=NIV)

[Proverbs 21:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+21%3A15&version=NIV)

[Isaiah 30:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+30%3A18&version=NIV)

Quotations

“A God who could pardon without justice might one of these days condemn without reason.” - Charles Spurgeon

“Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by his faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.” – Martin Luther

“The good news is that God himself has decreed a way to satisfy the demands of His justice without condemning the whole human race. Hell is one way to settle accounts with sinners and uphold his justice. But there is another way. The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God. And what is this wisdom? The death of the Son of God for sinners!” – John Piper

“We read you best in Him who came to bear for us the cross of shame; sent by the Father from on high, our life to live, our death to die.” – Hymn, “O Love of God”

Recommendations

<http://www.monergism.com/unfailing-mercy-god>

<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/a-question-of-justice>

<http://www.gotquestions.org/mercy-justice.html>

Commentary

Mercy and justice are two ideas that seem contradictory. To embrace one is to exclude the other: justice demands punishing wrongdoing and mercy requires pardoning wrongdoing. In a court of law, when a case is presented before a judge, he is supposed to hear the evidence and mete out what he determines by the law to be just and right. If a man has committed a crime that requires a $1,000 fine to be paid, in order to rule with justice the judge must rule that he pay the fine. Mercy cannot be shown, pardon cannot be given, if justice is to be held up perfectly. How can mercy and justice ever work in harmony in our world? It just doesn’t seem possible.

We face the same confusing question when it comes to salvation, and God’s nature. Scripture very clearly teaches that God is a just judge, and He will be the one to right all wrongs. It also teaches us that God is abounding with a mercy available to each person individually. In Scripture, we learn that God demands complete and total purity from every human being. This is because we were designed to bear His perfect image and any sin renders us unfit to fulfill our design. We cannot come before God’s presence or exist with Him eternally if we have even the tiniest fraction of sin’s taint within us, for God should not and will not tolerate sin. The prescribed punishment for sin is death. In order for God to show justice to wrongdoers, then, all those who sin must face that punishment. The Bible also tells us that the whole of mankind is riddled with sin. There is not a single one of us who can truthfully say, “I have never sinned.” If this is true, then, all of humanity must face death, for all have sinned. Yet, the whole Bible testifies to God’s plan of redemption! It tells us that if we simply come to him with a sincerely repentant and contrite heart, then He will show us mercy. It tells that His mercies are new every morning, and they *never* come to an end. It tells us that God is *rich* with mercy! How could God forgive the sins of humanity and be merciful if justice demands their death? Wouldn’t one of these attributes of God’s nature have to be sacrificed in order for the other to be maintained? It would seem so, until you dig a little bit deeper and begin to understand the immense wisdom of God’s plan for salvation. He has created a way to be both completely merciful and completely just. The cross of Christ.

When God sent His son to die the most excruciatingly painful death ever conjured up by man, Jesus Christ’s death on the cross, it was the one point in history where it has been said that justice and mercy kissed. Jesus Christ took the punishment for sin that humanity deserved, and He paid for it Himself, so that mercy might be shown to us. Because He was God incarnate, Jesus was the only man to ever walk this worth in total sinlessness. He was the only man who didn’t deserve punishment, and yet the very man who bore it. He bore all our sins on that cross. He took on the wrath of God for the sins of the world. Therefore, God could mete out His justice—the punishment for sin was paid. The Father could also show mercy to those who saw that great sacrifice and repented of their sins. He can be both fully just and fully merciful because of what Jesus did for us. Hallelujah!

Now all of the above will give you a grasp on the basic answer to this question. If you’re looking for a way to address some more “complexities” in the topic, like the Stoa ballot looks for, then there are several options.

One issue intricately connected with the question that people will take up is the question of how was God merciful and just eternally? Sure, Christ’s death makes it possible for God to show mercy to everyone that came after His death, but how could God have been merciful *before* Christ died? The Word of God is very clear that God is unchanging, and His attributes have been completely part of His nature for all eternity. God didn’t just start being merciful after Christ died two thousand years ago. He has both been a justly judging God, and shown that abundant mercy to people throughout the history of the earth. In the Old Testament, there are many passages where God offers mercy to people as long as they seek Him with a sincerely contrite spirit, broken over their sin. The answer to the “how” here is still Christ. Paul constantly emphasizes that Abraham’s faith was accounted to him as righteousness. What did Abraham have faith in? Abraham, and the many other people in the Old Testament admired for their faith, looked to the cross. They looked to the Messiah who was promised to come. They had faith in the Messiah who *would* come to pay for their sins. Because God is eternal and time is not relevant to Him, Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary covered all of history in God’s eyes. Anyone who had a repentant heart and faith in the Messiah, whether they came before or after that event in history, could reap the benefits.

Morality without God *by Alisa Stringer*

Can morality exist without God?

Bible Verses

Genesis 3

Psalm 53

Mark 10:18

John 6:63

Romans 2:15

Romans 3:10-12

1 John 4

1 Peter 1:15

Quotations

“No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good.” – C. S. Lewis[[2]](#footnote-2)

"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." – George Washington[[3]](#footnote-3)

Recommendations

None Righteous by R. C. Sproul[[4]](#footnote-4)

This short article provides a nice introduction into the question of sin nature and goodness without God. R. C. Sproul was one of the most influential modern theologians, and his insight and clarity will prove useful in many different situations.

Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas[[5]](#footnote-5)

According to one priest who had regular contact with Saint Aquinas, he used to spend hours confessing his sins to a priest. Thomas Aquinas was acutely aware of his own failing and of the fallenness of man. From this belief in his innate sinfulness, Aquinas developed his famous statement, Sola Gratia, by grace alone. Without God, all men are fallen and cannot be good, but by God’s grace, we can be seen as pure in His sight.

Commentary

In a world of constant negativity in the news, we are occasionally given a heartwarming story. Perhaps we hear of a child who starts a charity or a group intent on saving animals from flooding. When we see these stories, we often react by talking about how sweet and kind these people are in a world of negativity. It is easy to then mistake kindness for morality. But those two words are not equivalent. Kindness is directed toward one person or group. An individual may be kind by buying a stranger a cup of coffee or holding a door. In contrast, morality is absolute. All actions are either moral or immoral, no matter who is involved or affected. This is important because absolute morality must be set by an absolutely moral figure, namely God. As Christians, we ought to be kind, and to recognize kindness in others, but we must never confuse sympathy for morality.

People can be kind to one another, but they cannot be moral beings without God. Morality is a strict measure of a man, and it leaves no room for mistakes. As Romans 3:23 famously says, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Because we have all done wrong, we are unfit to determine standards of morality. Ethics is necessarily based on the standard of perfection, which none of us can meet. Yet despite all our failings, God still loves us. He calls us out of our sin and purges our record in His sight. Morality without God is impossible. And even when we have accepted Him, we are still sinful creatures. As Paul wrote in Romans 7, “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” But God loves us in spite of our faults, and if we are willing to trust in Him, He wipes our slate clean and begins to teach us to be more like Him. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Human Nature

What do secular theories of human origins get right and wrong about human nature?

This question is not answered at this time in the Season 22 release schedule. This worksheet is provided for you to take your own notes for preparation.

Bible Verses

Quotations

Recommendations

Commentary

God Creating Hell *by Luis Garcia*

How could a loving God send man to Hell?

Bible Verses

[Deuteronomy 32:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+32%3A4&version=NIV)
[Psalm 5; 7:11; 33:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+5%3B+7%3A11%3B+33%3A5&version=NIV)
[Isaiah 14:12-15; 53](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+14%3A12-15%3B+53&version=NIV)
[Matthew 7:13-14; 25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7%3A13-14%3B+25&version=NIV)
[John 3:14-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A14-21&version=NIV)
[Galatians 6:7-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6%3A7-8&version=NIV)
[Colossians 2:13-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+2%3A13-14&version=NIV)
[2 Peter 3:1-9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Peter+3%3A1-9&version=NIV)
[Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+20%3A11-15&version=NIV)

Quotations

“The essence of hell is relational…In the Bible, hell is separation or banishment from the most beautiful being in the world – God Himself. It is exclusion from all that matters, from all value, not only from God but also from those who have come to know and love Him…Hell is the final sentence that says you refused regularly to live for the purpose for which you were made, and the only alternative is to sentence you away from eternity. So it is punishment. But it’s also the natural consequence of a life that has been lived in a certain way.” –J. P. Moreland being interviewed by Lee Strobel in his book *The Case for Faith*

“I feel that if God should smite me now, without hope or offer of mercy, to the lowest hell, I should only have what I justly deserve; and I feel that if I be not punished for my sins, or if there be not some plan found by which my sin can be punished in another, I cannot understand how God can be just at all: how shall he be Judge of all the earth, if he suffer offenses to go unpunished?” **–**C.H. Spurgeon (*Expiation*, Sermon 561, Isa. 53:10)

Recommendations

*Erasing Hell* by Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle

*The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel, Chapter 6

*The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis, Chapter 9 (especially pg. 340)

<http://gracequotes.org/topic/hell-justified/>

http://carm.org/apologetics/evidence-and-answers/loving-god-would-never-send-anyone-hell

Commentary

The answer to this question dwells on the balance between God’s love and justice, as well as human nature and destiny. Hell is the destiny of the rebellious and wicked. They are sent there by God and they sent themselves there. The books and articles above do an excellent job discussing this issue, and you will find they don’t agree necessarily. I provided that contrast intentionally, as I know it will provoke great meditation and time before the Lord and His Word. Ultimately, lead the topic to show a great flaw in the question. The question makes it seem that this “loving God” makes the destiny of Hell to be the only option. Truly, as Francis Chan stated in a sermon, the crucifixion of Jesus was Him bearing Hell for us to give us a second chance to experience His love, grace and mercy. He is the other option. Broad is the way that leads to destruction. Narrow is the way to righteousness. Responsibility is on the shoulders of men, but God has brought His mercy for all nations.

Loving Sinners *by Zack Seals*

Explain what is meant by the statement, “God hates the sin but loves the sinner.”

Bible Verses

*God hates sinners:* Psalm 5:5-6, Psalm 11:5, Leviticus 20:23, Proverbs 6:16-19, Hosea 9:15, John 3:36

*God is love:* Psalm 103:8-14; Psalm 118; John 3:16; 1 John 3:16, 4:7-8, 16

*How both are displayed:* Romans 5:5-11, 2 Corinthians 5:21

Quotations

“The gospel reveals eternal realities about God that we would sometimes rather not face. We prefer to sit back, enjoy our clichés, and picture God as a Father who might help us, all while ignoring God as a Judge who might damn us.” – David Platt, *Radical*

Recommendations

*Follow Me* by David Platt, Chapter 2

*Radical* by David Platt, Chapter 2

“The Scandal of the Gospel,” Sermon by David Platt, preaching on Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Commentary

This is a powerful, yet extremely common statement that is all too frequently assumed to be true without a full examination of important biblical passages. The short answer to the question is both yes and no. Although that isn’t all that can be said, it needs to be clearly explained as a foundational point before the main thesis of the speech is reached. Remember, this question is the perfect gateway to the Gospel and it needs to be powerfully displayed in your presentation. Whether you are in a room in competition or on the street with a random stranger, this question is an excellent way to show the beauty of God’s message of salvation. How does this message of salvation begin? It must start with the nature of who God is.

There is absolutely no problem with there being “sin” or a “sinner” in any state if there is not an absolutely holy and morally pure God who is just enough to condemn a guilty person. If the “God” being asked about in the question does not possess these qualities then the very definition of “sinner” has been redefined before you even get to an answer. Recognize that the biblical explanation of God’s holy and righteous nature is essential to setting up your answer to the question. A brief review will be helpful. The Bible says that God’s very nature is one that is holy (Leviticus 19:2), and therefore, it cannot look upon any evil (Habakkuk 1:13). The result of having this perfectly holy nature is that He not only always does what is right (Genesis 18:25) but that He is utterly and completely righteous as well (Psalm 7:9).

What then is the consequence of these clear truths? God hates unrighteousness. Therefore, God hates sinners. It is an unwarranted assumption of the question to somehow divide into two categories a “sin” and a “sinner” as if God views them in a separate way. In Romans 7:18 Paul says “For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is my flesh.” It is a fundamental part of human nature to oppose God and therefore it is a necessary component of a sinner to act in accordance with his nature (Romans 8:5-8). Once this close connection is realized, God’s righteous hatred of both the sin and the sinner begins to become clearer. Listen to the perspicuity with which the author of Psalms describes the nature of God. It says in Psalm 5:5-6 that “The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evil doers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” Notice the verse does not distinguish between the *action* of the man and the *man itself* like the question is asking you to do. The verse says the Lord not only hates evil, but that he also abhors the *man* committing the evil*.* This isn’t an isolated occurrence though. Take another example in the book of Leviticus for example. It says in Leviticus 20:23 “And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore *I detested them” (*emphasis mine). Hate, abhor, and detest are the words found to describe the sinner both individually as well as nationally, and this is only after an examination of two verses! In fact, the verses could be multiplied.[[6]](#footnote-6)

We must not end there though, for the clear witness of Scripture is also that God is loving. Indeed, it not only states that God is loving as an action that He does but as a description of the very nature of who God is! 1 John 4:7-8 is startlingly direct when it states the reason we are to love one another is precisely because God is love. John 3:16 undoubtedly shows this love on display. In summary then, the Bible presents us with these two propositions:

1. God hates sinners, and
2. God loves sinners.

How are we to answer this apparent contradiction?

The cross. It *must* go back to the cross. It is only at the cross of Christ on Golgotha where God’s *hatred* of sinners was poured out in a demonstration of His *love* for sinners at the same time. The beauty of the amazing love that God has for his children is that “*while we were still sinners*, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, emphasis mine). The incredible truth of the cross is that although Jesus wasn’t a sinner like every other human being he stood as our representative and was *treated* like we all deserved to be treated on that cross. 2 Corinthians 5:21 powerfully summarizes the Gospel when it says “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The perfect God-man Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, *was made to be sin*! How was this done? Did Jesus become a sinner? Of course not! 1 Peter 2:24 explains “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”. The very sin that deserved God’s unyielding wrath was *borne* by Christ on the cross so that he was treated as a sinner in the way we were meant to be treated.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The cross saves us from our sin and solves any apparent contradiction that may arise between God’s hatred of sinners and love for sinners. Both statements are true and both are left unanswered unless the wonder of the cross is proclaimed. Praise be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit forever.

1. \* This question was printed in the August 2015 edition of *Silver Book.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lewis, C S. Mere Christianity. 2017. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Diener, Paul W. Religion and Morality: An Introduction. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sproul, R.C. “None Righteous.” Ligonier Ministries, https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/none-righteous/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Aquinas, Thomas. Summa Theologica. Random House, 1948. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Please see the above list of verses provided. Take the time to read each one in its full context as you consider which ones to use in your speech. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Check Isaiah 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)