

company in the US), told *Forbes* magazine in 2012 about one of the customer satisfaction strategies his company used in moving from being the lowest rated to the most improved across a five-year period: 'We have a voluntary program which is really going old school, that we call "Thank You Thursdays". On Thursdays we gather in rooms, generally cafeterias in our offices across the country. Employees get together and we write handwritten thank you cards to our customers. It's amazing the impact that it's had on customers because not too many people get handwritten notes anymore'.

Handwritten or not, do you remember your reaction when you last received a personal note of appreciation? Have you noticed the reaction of someone who's received a card or other note of appreciation? Do you keep a secret stash of letters, cards, or even sticky notes with words of recognition or appreciation? There is every chance that you do.

The value of a handwritten note is such that, in our digital-everything age, there are now even, yes, apps for sending 'handwritten' notes to people. That just seems wrong somehow, but it reinforces how much we value personalised approaches to communication.

As I write this my eye catches an ancient yellow sticky note shaped a bit like a star (maybe that's why I kept it). The nine words on the star were written by someone in a workshop many years ago. Somehow I just haven't been able to throw that little star note away and it remains posted on a wall. It's not the note (or the handwriting), it's what the note communicates, what it reminds me of, and how it continues to make me feel.

Personalised recognition and appreciation is not soft, silly, or superficial. It is often deeply meaningful to those who receive such notes. And they can be hard to write until you make them part of your

way of doing things (not only like the CEOs above, but also the head of a middle school, the public service manager, the small business owner, and the parent who immediately come to mind).

Restoring a touch of personalisation to our too-often de-personalised working environments can be simple, powerful, and humanising. It's about communicating a sense of respect, care, and appreciation. It's about sustaining the connections that create energy.

Maybe an occasional personalised message—even if it's just on a Post-It® note—will provide the 'write note' for someone you know.

© Pacific Training & Development, 2013. Used with permission. For more information about leadership and team development, communication training or accredited coaching go to www.pacific.qld.edu.au or call +61 7 5553 6060.

Seven reasons for believing in God



By Roy Lawrence

Back in 2005, I had what theologians call a 'Dark Night of the Soul' experience. It was horrible. My faith deserted me and I found myself in a state of complete and utter spiritual darkness.

For a while not only could I not believe in God—but the very idea of God ceased to have any meaning for me.

My whole life in the ministry seemed at that time to be a delusion and a deception. It was agonising.

Mercifully this time did come to an end, however, and I found I was able to grope my way out of the darkness and rediscover a capacity for faith. In fact this re-discovered faith is stronger than ever. I now find unbelief quite impossible. So many totally compelling reasons for belief have now come to me, and I would like to share some of them with you.

1. Creation implies a creator

The basic and indisputable fact of life is that 'stuff exists'. I exist, you exist, the universe exists. It seems plain common sense that it all has to come from somewhere. Five hundred years before Jesus the Greek philosopher Parmenides said: 'Nothing comes from nothing'. It is a principle which has been acknowledged ever since then. Even those who believe that creation can be explained if you think that everything has evolved from

primordial slime, are still left with the question: 'Where did the primordial slime itself come from?'

2. Design implies a designer

The fact that stuff exists is only a starting point. For we can not only say that 'stuff exists', but that the stuff which exists is totally amazing in its design. Whether we look upwards through a telescope or downwards through a microscope, whether we consider the orbits of planets or the symmetry of snowflakes, there is evidence of regularity and order. There are discernable patterns both in the mega-mystery of galaxies and in the micro-mysteries of atoms.

What does this say to us in terms of common sense? If I were to find a pile of junk by the side of the road—a couple of rusty tin cans, a few feathers, a crumpled bit of old newspaper, some fallen leaves—it would be reasonable to assume they had just been blown together by chance, wouldn't it? However, if I were to find a watch in the gutter, or a camera, or a mobile phone, I would certainly never say: 'A watch, or a camera, or a mobile phone has happened here by chance'. I would assume they belonged to someone. Somebody would have had to make them and someone would own them.

It's a matter of indisputable fact that the universe has much more in common with the watch, the camera, and the mobile phone than with the pile of junk. In the words of Sir Fred Hoyle: 'To claim that the universe resulted by accident is like saying that an explosion in a junk yard could result in a Jumbo Jet ready to fly. The universe is a put-up job'.¹

3. Artistry implies an artist

Again we are still only at the starting point as we consider the evidence around us for the existence of God. For the universe not only shows us order and design, it also shows us artistry of the highest nature. I am privileged to live near the sea. I can look out from my house in one direction and see the glory of the



amazing sunsets which we have in our part of the world, or in another direction I can see the beauty of the roses in our garden. Can such artistry possibly be accidental?

If we were to put a million monkeys to type on a million word processors, what chance is there that one of them would just happen to type out a Shakespearean play entirely by accident? Virtually none at all. Artistry implies an artist. I would believe in Shakespeare even if there were no

evidence of his life, simply because I have his works in all their artistic glory.

4. Moral law implies a lawgiver

Without law we would be in deep trouble. For instance there would be chaos on the roads if we were to drive on the left or right entirely according to our own whims and fancies. The laws which hold society together have to come from somewhere. Small-scale laws like the rules of the road can come from our own legislators, but

there are larger laws which we can neither determine nor change.

These unchanging principles of life are sometimes called 'moral law'. They are concerned with the difference between right and wrong, the difference between good and evil. We cannot determine them. We can only discover them. They in no way depend upon our own whims and fancies or the variable practices of this or that society.

Legislators have no power to change them. Any law in any society will be perverted and wrong if it ignores these principles of life. History is full of examples: the massacre of the innocents by King Herod, the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis, the violation of human rights by corrupt governments today may be legal by their own twisted standards but are not, and could never be, right. They offend a moral law which is greater than they are. I know of no way to account for this moral law other than by the existence of a Supreme Lawgiver.

5. The miracle of you and me

So far we have cast a wide net, stretching our minds to consider the implications of the universe, but in truth we hardly need to do so in order to find a reason to believe in God. We need to look no further than ourselves.

Some time ago there was a TV advert showing a car assembly line where all the work was done by a series of robotic arms. We found ourselves marvelling at whoever had invented such a mechanical miracle. Yet those mechanical arms were crude compared with your arms and mine. Look for a moment at your own hand. It is an amazing mechanism: delicate, complex, multi-functional, wonderful in every way.

Even the smallest part of your hand could hardly have come into being by accident. Sir Isaac Newton said: 'In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence!'

6. Religious experience

If our bodies testify to God's existence, how much more so do our minds and how much more does that mysterious core of our being which we sometimes call 'the spirit'?

Throughout history men and women have reported that their inner life has included experiences which are religious or mystical in their nature. They still do. I feel immensely privileged on the occasions when people tell me of such things.

Back in the 1980s, Oxford psychologist Basil Douglas-Smith collected dozens of these experiences and has published them in a little book entitled *The Mystics Come to Harley Street*.² He has no doubt about the validity and reality of these experiences. He believes that in themselves they justify religious belief. He recognises the importance of the fact that, whilst most of us have to make an act of faith to believe in God, there are surprisingly many who would say that they actually 'know' of God's existence because they have experienced him. He stresses that such people are not in any way deranged and quotes this little poem:

*Don't prattle of religious mania.
They're saner than you all—and brainier!*

7. Jesus

Writing this article has stretched me—and reading it may have stretched you. Life is a mysterious process, simultaneously beautiful, bewildering, and sometimes painful. Fathoming its origins and its purpose is no easy matter. I know there are difficulties in believing in God, but there are many

more difficulties in atheism. We need help. We need guidance.

I am particularly fortunate, because I was privileged to spend four years at Oxford and then two further years at Cambridge, studying both Classics and Theology. In doing so I was able to consider the thoughts of some of the greatest minds in the ancient world: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and many more. At the end of this time, however, my firm conclusion was that the greatest wisdom I had encountered was to be found in Jesus.

Even when I was struggling with my own 'dark night of the soul', I never ceased to find Jesus crucially important. In the last resort, although all the reasons for belief which I have shared with you are strong ones, above all I take God the Father on trust from Jesus. To Jesus, God the Father was as real as the air he breathed. God the Father was the core of his being.

Atheists have to say: 'I am wiser than Jesus'. Personally I could never say that, and I would never want to do so.

Notes

¹ Sir Fred Hoyle (1915 — 2001) is renowned as one of the twentieth century's great scientific thinkers, who was not afraid to question orthodox beliefs.

² Basil Douglas-Smith, *The Mystics Come to Harley Street*, Regency Press (London & New York) Limited, 1984. ISBN 13: 978-0721206080.

Canon Roy Lawrence has spent most of his life in the ministry working in Anglican churches in the North of England, as well as serving as a hospital chaplain. A well-known Christian writer and broadcaster, Roy has authored fourteen books.

