

Podcast Companion

Is the Bible infallible?

In today's session we're beginning our review of the Bible's infallibility. The idea for this blog is to *supplement* and *support* as the companion for the [podcast session of the week](#), and also to *expand* on some of the stuff that gets said. This helps me keep the times of the podcast down, but also helps you if you find something particularly interesting and want to look further into it – I've already done the leg work for you!

So, basically, **go and listen to the podcast and then come back and read this!**

Now let's get into the nuts and bolts of the podcast.

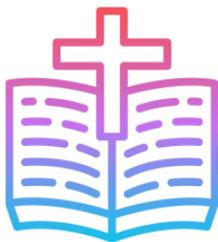
Is the Bible infallible? Does it teach us things that aren't true?

Does it matter either way?

Well, if you've listened to episode 1 of the new podcast, you should already know where we're lining up on those issues!

But, to recap – if the Bible teaches us things that aren't true, then we can't place it as the authority in our lives.

That's not strictly true, we *can* place it as authority, but if it leads us to believe things that aren't true then why would we do that? No one, outside of people who have an ulterior motive, willingly believe a lie.



If the Bible teaches us things
that aren't true, we can't place
it as the authority in our lives

Additionally, if we believe the Bible is both God's Word and the way He has revealed himself to us, we quite naturally try to take it seriously and live how God recommends to us, primarily through trying to live like Jesus. What if this leads us to a worldview that doesn't work? Or has glaring issues that either refute or contradict itself?

That's why we're exploring 3 major elements of the Christian worldview, directly from the Bible, to see if the underpinning teachings are true. If these are true, or more likely true than false, then we can feel *far, far* more confident that the rest is also true.

Let's review the three underpinnings of the Christian faith:

1. Without God, life has no meaning, purpose or value
2. Without God, good and bad, good and evil, right and wrong are all meaningless terms

3. Without God, humanity does not have any inherent value

In today's podcast we looked at #1 – without God, life has no meaning, purpose or value.

We looked at the idea of life being meaningless without God. Again, to make sure this is clear, this *does not* mean that people who don't *believe* in God live meaningless lives, but that if God does not exist then *nothing* has any meaning.

Hopefully I've explained that enough times now that I won't get anyone come to me and say "are you saying atheists' lives have no meaning?!"

TO BE CLEAR – No, I'm exactly not saying that. I'm saying exactly the opposite. Their lives have meaning regardless of whether they admit it or not – **they** are saying their lives have no ultimate meaning.

In fact, loads of famous atheist philosophers have said the same thing!

Many philosophers have engaged with this idea of life and meaning, most often classified under the bracket of 'existentialism', which has multiple off-shoots (absurdism, nihilism, etc).

This has led many to consider what is known as 'the absurdity of life' which means that, if God does not exist, there is no ultimate meaning to life. Exactly what we're discussing, which is handy.

On this subject, Bertrand Russell once stated we must build our lives upon "*the firm foundation of unyielding despair*", because a life without meaning is just walking from one disaster to another, suffering the whole way with absolutely no reason for it. Pretty depressing.

Richard Dawkins once remarked "*there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference*" which is a perfectly logical and acceptable opinion to hold if God does not exist, as Dawkins believes.

Let's do one more for good luck – Kurt Vonnegut (not a well-known writer, in all honesty) once stated "*As for myself: I had come to the conclusion that there was nothing sacred about myself or about any human being, that we were all machines, doomed to collide and collide and collide*" because if God does not exist, and we have no divine mandate or value, this really is all we are.



The firm foundation of unyielding despair

Right, let's move on before I have a breakdown. Hopefully that hasn't made you too sad – existentialism is often the realm of the desperately conflicted, I'm afraid, and with good reason.

If, for some reason, you would like to learn more about existentialism and the thinking around it with regards to God, I would recommend the following resources:

- *'The Brothers Karamazov'*, a novel by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. This is a fantastic novel that displays the implications of life when lived in the face of meaningless suffering, but also balances the Christian perspective of meaningful suffering which we will review soon! I appreciate this is an entire novel though, which is a) long and b) costly, so only get this if you're *super* into this.
- [This article by William Lane Craig](#) entitled 'The Absurdity of Life Without God'. This article is one of the premiere Christian philosophers flexing his mental acuity and giving a hugely

informative argument. I'll admit, this article is very technical and might be a tough read, but it's worth giving a bash (or if not, hold onto this link for a while).

- [This video, also by William Lane Craig](#), also entitled 'The Absurdity of Life Without God'. This video gives the weight of the situation confronted by this modern world that denies the existence of God. I'm almost reluctant to put this here, as it does a better job of explaining everything that I have tried to explain, and does it much faster... but I'm willing to take the risk of looking redundant, so here it is.

However, as luck would have it, this is *not* the world we observe! Because God *does* exist! I won't spend thousands of words explaining how we can make this bold claim, I'm going to go through the best arguments for the existence of God with you in the coming months, but let's just look at some evidence for life's non-absurdity.

Firstly, only the scariest of history's villains (such as Stalin and Mao) live as though life has no meaning. This is because that belief leads to horrendous atrocities (Stalin and Mao, if you're not aware, were responsible for two of the worst genocides in history, killing millions upon millions of people).

It's also worth noting that, if someone were to claim they believed God does not exist and life has no meaning, purpose or value, they *could not* condemn these actions! If people are being honest, they will say these things are objectively wrong... and in so doing completely refute their own worldview. Winner!

Secondly, people routinely live as though their lives have meaning! Imagine all the things people do in their lives – go to school and learn to get good grades, get the appropriate and often time-consuming and difficult qualifications in order to obtain a 'good' job, have meaningful relationships and eventually get married, have children with their spouse and try to raise them correctly, stay as healthy as possible so they can work longer and enjoy time with their family more, manage finances so they can look after themselves and their spouse in their twilight years whilst also supporting their older children and one day leaving them an inheritance when they die, learn about politics and vote throughout all this to try to make both their life and the world a better place...

That's just a short list of the many things people do with their lives! That's not even including 'experiences' like travel, volunteering, mission trips, vocational work, further education, which are all apparently meaningful and valuable...

All of these things, regardless of whether you're a theist, an atheist, or something in between, are almost universally recognised as the 'normal', 'good', accepted path of life.

Am I saying there aren't people out there who think marriage and children aren't good, or at least aren't right for them? I'm not saying that, I'm simply saying "look at the pattern of life *the vast majority of people* follow and try to achieve, and look at what they say about it". You'll always find someone who campaigns for Extinction Rebellion and thinks having children is morally wrong because the earth is already over-populated (all evidently false, but whatever), but these are the exception to the rule, generally speaking.

Additionally, people say all sorts of things like "having an education is valuable", "having children is really meaningful", "we should all try to live good lives", "it's better to be financially stable"... but if you believe God doesn't exist, on what basis can you make these claims?

You can't, not really. You'd need to say "I think" or "my opinion is", because you can't make objective claims like this without God.

Even the concept of something being 'good' or 'bad' isn't really applicable without God, which is another topic we'll be looking at further into this series.

All this is to say that we can safely believe that life has purpose, value and meaning, purely off our and other's experiences.

It's similar to something Lizzie once asked me in a Sunday session – how do we know this is real and not just a simulation?

It's a great question and has a lengthy answer, but the easiest answer is one that works quite well for us now – we are *perfectly* justified in believing this reality truly *is* reality, purely from our experiences of it as such. There is no other readily available and obvious option, so it's perfectly rational to continue believing we aren't in the Matrix (please, please, *please* don't go and try to dodge bullets in a trench coat – trench coats have never looked cool).

In the same way, we're perfectly justified in believing life has purpose, value and meaning, purely from our experiences of it being such.



We're perfectly justified in believing
life has purpose, value and meaning,
purely from our experiences

This leads us to our last bit of this blog, our scripture for the podcast:

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 – “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets— before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13 – “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 speaks lengthily about the absurdity of life without God, because Paul was keenly aware of other thinkers at the time (and was somewhat of a philosopher himself). Without God, regardless of how good the things someone does are, they are simply '*vanity*'. They last as long as a breath in cold air.

However, in 12:13 Paul lays out what the meaning of life is – to fear God. That's the end of the matter, as far as Paul is concerned.

You see, if God exists, and we have heard God's word through the prophets, Jesus and the Bible,

then we have a great blueprint of what matters in life. Yes, all of our actions have ultimate *corporate* meaning in the face of one another and the encroaching eternal salvation or damnation, but it's also the motives for the actions you do and the actions that are unseen that have ultimate *personal* value and meaning.

This really is worth saying (writing) and it will come back in later podcasts and blogs – **the ultimate good in this life is to be reconciled to God for eternity.**

Nothing more, nothing less. All of God's purposes, whether He lays them out in Jesus' teaching and life or the commandments of the Old Testament, all of them are made with the intention of bringing His lost children back to Him. Every commandment and teaching, every life lesson and wisdom literature, all is for the express purpose of ensuring as many people as possible achieve the greatest good possible – to love and know God.



**The ultimate good in this life
is to be reconciled to God
for all eternity**

Hopefully that's not too heavy, that really should be uplifting.

In Galatians 2:20 then we see the means by which we are to live – in light of Christ's sacrifice. This is just another way of saying what I've already said – Christ's sacrifice opened up the opportunity for us all to have the greatest good possible. God's plan for salvation was set in motion before time began, before creation had occurred, because God *knew* you and I would need to be reconciled to Him, and God *desired* that His most beloved creation could come to Him freely, willingly and simply. Christ's life, death and resurrection does that.

Additionally, living in the light of Christ's sacrifice makes it clear to us that salvation and eternal life aren't something that you get at the moment you die – you *live your life in the light of eternity*. Your life has meaning, your troubles have meaning, your decisions have meaning, your suffering has meaning, because you're living in the light of eternity! If the result of all of those things is the greatest possible good, then it's ultimately meaningful.

That's my way of wrapping this up on a high note, a positive note. I hope you feel uplifted.

The Bible affirms that life has ultimate purpose, value and meaning. We, in our everyday experiences, can rationally and justifiably believe that our lives have purpose, meaning and value. If God did not exist, this would not be true. Therefore, it's reasonable to also assume that God exists...

But more on that in future.

Hopefully you've found this companion helpful (and not simply depressing or boring). I'll continue to do them for each podcast.

Speaking of which, check back on [Chawn Hill's Connect page](#) every Sunday to see what has been uploaded, and follow along with these companions.

If you're on Instagram then follow Chawn Youth @chawnyouth, and if you're on WhatsApp we'd love to have you in the youth chat so we can keep in-touch through all this.

Continue checking in on one another, keeping in-touch (figuratively, not literally – 2metres minimum please) and praying for one another.

Speak to you all next week.