

## My Story

All throughout history, people have tried to disprove the Bible, God and Creation. The irony is that in an effort to disprove God, many of these people have themselves become Christians. Take for example Simon Greenleaf, a Harvard professor who literally wrote the book on courtroom evidence. He was convinced that the resurrection of Christ was a hoax. So, after being challenged by his students, he set out to prove it. After examining the evidence, Simon Greenleaf came to the conclusion that the evidence for Christ was overwhelming and beyond a reasonable doubt. With that knowledge he became a Christian.

Again, Clive Staples Lewis, better known as CS Lewis was a professor of literature at Oxford University. An avowed atheist until the age of 32, he finally changed his affiliation after he could no longer deny the logic of God and Christianity. C S Lewis went on to be one of the best-known defenders of Christianity from philosophical standpoint (or what's known as philosophical apologetics). I personally know people who have come to Christ because of his book "Mere Christianity".

A more recent example is Lee Stroebel. Some of you have probably heard of him as he wrote the "Case for" series (Case for Christ, Case for Faith, Case For Easter, Case for Creation). But Lee Stroebel started out as a hardcore atheist. He had a law degree from Yale and was an investigational reporter for the Chicago Tribune. One day his wife came home and told him that she had accepted Christ and was a "born again" Christian...much to his chagrin. He was determined to prove that she was wrong. So he put his investigational tools to work and set out upon his goal. But a funny thing happened. Along the way he became convinced that the evidence for Christ was overwhelming. So much so that he eventually quit his job, and became a teaching pastor and best selling author of Christian apologetics.

Now the next story is about someone who is not famous or particularly noteworthy but someone whose story is near and dear to my heart. This person couldn't remember a time when he believed in God. Not even as a young child did he believe in God. He could remember going to church and thinking how weird it was. He'd go to school and learn all these facts and figures but went to church once a week and learned about this guy, Jesus, who died 2000 years ago but was supposed to love us today...it just didn't make sense. He just couldn't believe that the adults at church believed this stuff either. To him it seemed like

the emperor's clothes. He just knew that some day they their eyes would be opened and they'd see this nonsense for what it was.

Then something happened that confirmed to him that there was no God. When he was nine, his mother died of cancer. You see, I was that boy.

I distinctly remember not being mad at God; it just confirmed to me that there was no God. And then later on in high school, I was taught the Theory of Evolution and I knew then that I was right.

Throughout my life, I have several strong memories of people trying to share their faith with me; maybe it was because I would challenge them. But, it seemed to me that they could never give me a good answer for why they believed. Sure, they had heart felt beliefs, but when I pressed them, they could never give me concrete reasons, only personal and spiritual reasons. To me that just wasn't enough.

I remember in high school we had this art teacher named Mr. Allen. He was 6'4" and a former golden gloves boxer and commanded a lot of respect. And he was also the faculty Jesus freak. He was a "born again Christian" and was on fire for Jesus. He even had his own Bible Church. This was back in the days when you could actual talk about religion in school. He even had scriptural references up in his class. Of course he had John 3:16. Anyway, he was very easy to get "going". Most of the guys would just be playing devil's advocated... not me. I couldn't believe that he *really* believed that stuff. Well he shared his faith with me and tried to explain why he believed but it didn't take. I just thought it was all nonsense. I do remember one thing he said though; he said, "Man has an innate desire to seek God". Well not me, my only desire was to find out what compelled otherwise intelligent people to believe this stuff.

Later when I was a senior, I was on my first date with Lori Huebner. We were going to Fort Dodge to see a movie. Ft. Dodge was about 20 miles from my hometown of Webster City. We went there because Ft. Dodge had a cinemaplex... they had theatre with 2 screens. Well it was the middle of winter and it was cold - very, very cold - well below zero. I can't believe our parents' let us go. Of course my car broke down on the way back; it over-heated. Can you believe it! It over-heated!! Here we are in the middle of nowhere because, in my infinite wisdom, I had taken a short cut. If it had been summer, I'm sure Lori would have thought I planned it. But now we were worried about freezing to death because were broken down in front of a ramshackle farmhouse

that looked uninhabited with no other farms in site. So we get out of the car and go knock on the door of this farmhouse. It's only 10 o'clock and all the lights are off except for a yard light. However, the lights come on when we knock. And it was this young couple and there are happy to see us! They inform us that we were the third car this month to break down in front of their house and that they knew that God had led us of to them. Yes.... we had entered the "Twilight Zone".

You see they were "born again" Christians and couldn't wait to share their faith with us. So they invited us in and let us use the phone. Come to find out they were members of Mr. Allen's bible church. Of course they shared their faith with us and told us how it changed their lives. Finally, our ride finally showed up and we got out alive. It was quite a first date. This whole episode convinced me on nothing... it was just a funny story to tell to my friends.

After winters like that, I decided to it might be a good idea to head south for college. So I went to University of Texas and joined a fraternity. If any of you have ever been in a fraternity or any group you know there are cliques. In our fraternity there was this group of guys from San Antonio. I don't what it was about San Antonio, it must have been the water, but these guys were known as the Thumpers (a/k/a bible beaters). They would have Thursday Bible studies and sit around playing guitar and singing Cum by Ya. If you've seen "Animal House" someone sitting around playing the guitar doesn't go over real well...but they were fun guys so they were tolerated. One of the Thumpers, Matt Cassidy, actually tried to evangelize me, probably because I would engage him in discussion about religion. I couldn't *believe* that he would waste his college career being a Thumper. I couldn't comprehend why someone would do that.

Now I was in a clique known as the "TV's". We were called that because we controlled the frat house TV and scheduled our classes around "All My Children". Don't laugh, I know for a fact there are still people here today that tape "All My Kids". Besides, Austin was a great place for All My Children as the local station was a day late and an hour earlier than the San Antonio station... think about it. You could watch two hours every other day, great for scheduling classes. Anyway.... So here is a TV (me) asking a Thumper why he was wasting his college career. Does anyone see anything wrong with that picture? Were my priorities screwed up or what?

Matt told me that college was the perfect time because when you got out of college you get caught up in your career and have less time to spend on your faith. Well, I didn't buy it but Matt shared his faith with me anyway but it didn't take. True to his comment, Matt pursued a career for a few years after getting out of college but later went to seminary. Today Matt is the senior pastor of a large growing church in Austin.

You see, some very spiritual people had shared their faith with me but I couldn't *just* believe no matter how compelling the belief was.

That all changed about 5 years ago when my wife, Kathy, in an effort to get me to attend church on a regular basis, convinced me to go this new Church that had a rock band. Ok, I know what some of you are thinking, "Gib, what were you doing going to church? You didn't believe in God." Well, I was a hypocrite; I had learned early in life who to tell and who not to tell. Strangers, acquaintances or fellow skeptics were ok but not people that mattered because I felt like I was letting them down. Besides, going to Church was my tradition. Even though I didn't believe in God or Jesus, I thought Christianity, as I knew it, was good but were man-made ideals. However, I would only go to church if there wasn't something better going on, and quite often, sleeping was a better deal.

Anyway, we visited this new church that met in a junior high school. Their goal was to church the un-churched of Johnson County. To that end, as you left the service, they had a table with a select group of books for people who were new to Christianity or were skeptics. Since I fell into the latter category, I picked up a book called "A Case for Christ" by Lee Stroebel, which tried to prove who Jesus was. While interesting, I still didn't believe in God or Creation so how could I believe in Jesus?

A few months later, the same author came out with "*A Case for Faith*". After reading Chapter 3, I can honestly say my life changed forever. This chapter was about the science behind Creation. Lee Stroebel was interviewing Walter Bradley, a professor of mechanical engineering from Texas A&M University who had his PhD in materials science from The University of Texas, and had headed up A&M's Polymer Technology Center. In addition, Professor Bradley was a member of an elite group of scientist who studied the origins of life. Among this group it was common knowledge that life did not begin here on earth. That the building blocks of life (the primordial ooze) did not exist on

earth at that time and the earth was not old enough for life to form and evolve as evolutionists propose. Furthermore, even if there were primordial ooze available for amino acids to form, which are needed to make protein, these amino acids are highly reactive in an oxygen rich atmosphere and would have to line up in such a precise manner (without reacting for other material) that the odds of this happening "are so infinitesimal that the human mind cannot comprehend them." In the words of Dr. Bradley, "the odds for all practical purposes are zero. Even though some people who aren't educated in this field still believe life emerged by chance, scientist simply don't believe this anymore." Dr. Bradley went on to say that given all the facts, that the most logical and well-supported explanation for life is that we are the product of an intelligent designer (or creator).

To me, the implications of this were immediate and profound. For the first time in my life, the thought occurred to me that maybe we were created. And if we were created, then maybe there is a God. And if there is a God, then maybe everything I had read about Jesus was true.

For the next two years I read everything I could get my hands on about evolution vs. Creation and the history, archeology and evidence behind Jesus and the Bible. I read and re-read the Bible. I took Alpha (as a skeptic). I even studied the Jewish roots of our faith so I could get a better understanding of Jesus and his teachings. I went from sleeping through one sermon a month to listening to 2-3 a day on Christian radio.

But what all this study has shown me is that some aspects of the Christian faith are not knowable; you just have to trust what the Bible tells you. Also, I learned that God is not some kind of cosmic killjoy and that my life would change for the better if I became a Christian, not worse as I had always assumed. But more importantly, I found that the most important aspects, the foundational aspects of the Christian faith, are true and knowable! Scientifically, there is virtually no doubt that Creation is true and that evolution is myth. In every scientific discipline, from the fossil record to genetics the evidence for Creation far outweighs the evidence of evolution. The only reason this is not apparent to many scientist is that they are adherents to a belief system known as naturalism which states that everything must come from nature, regardless of the evidence. To this group of people, the theory of evolution is the cornerstone of the faith. But this is changing rapidly as more and more scientists are becoming Socratic scientists and are following the evidence wherever it leads regardless of the

theological implication. ***It takes far more faith to believe in evolution than Creation.***

Additionally, archeology, history, textual criticism, and prophecy have shown me that the Bible is true and trustworthy, and that no other religious book or philosophy can make that claim. There is not a reputable historian today that doubts that Jesus was a real, historic person. And the direct and circumstantial evidence surrounding His death and resurrection is so overwhelming that I have no doubt that He rose from the dead. Because of this knowledge, I was able to accept the gift of grace given freely by God to all us through His son, Jesus Christ!

Some you might be thinking "Nice story but how does this apply to my life?" I'm glad you asked that question, because I'm going to tell you.

I'd like to answer with two verses. First:

#### **John 14:11 (New International Version)**

<sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

Jesus, by this verse, is letting us know that He knew that faith alone was not enough for some people. In fact, most people didn't believe Him until He proved it with His miracles and resurrection. For many of us, me included, our gap of skepticism is too great to be bridge by faith alone. It takes evidence and proof in order for us the narrow that gap so that it *can* be bridge by faith. So if you're struggling with doubts or are skeptical about the claims of Christianity, then you owe it to yourselves to look at the evidence with an open mind.

Now for those of you who are believers, I'd like to read the next passage:

#### **John 4:23-24 (New International Version)**

<sup>23</sup>Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit *and in truth*."

Most of you here today who are believers came to Christ spiritually... it just made sense to you and you've always just believed. What I think Jesus is saying, especially in the context of this verse, is that it's great to just believe but you also need to know that what you believe is true. For me I came to Christ because of truth and I'm working towards spirituality. For many of you, you came to Christ from a spiritual basis and are (or should be) working towards the Truth of God.

Let me give three reasons why I think that this is important. First; for your own faith. Many of you know people who you thought were deeply committed Christians who have walked away from their faith. It's obvious that the foundation of their faith couldn't withstand whatever it was that made them question their faith. We all have doubts at times. Most the time we are able to work through them. But there may come a time when your faith is shaken to its very core, to its foundation. If your faith is built on these foundational facts, then your faith has a solid foundation that is not easily shaken. For me, I fall back on these truths almost daily. You're not a skeptic for forty years and not have some of your old doubts rear their ugly head. Something innocuous can happen or be said, and my old doubts come flooding back. But I can take a deep breath and remember that I know for a fact that we are Created, that Jesus was a real person who was crucified, dead and buried, and that he rose from dead...and I'm Ok. I know with certainty these are true in the literal sense not just a hopeful belief.

Secondly: to help you in sharing your faith with others. I have always envied people who could "just believe"; those who have the "child-like" faith that Jesus talked about. But there are a lot a people like me who can't "just believe"; they're not able to suspend their secular belief system and believe regardless of how compelling the belief is. Most of the people I know outside of church (and many within) fit into this category. Think about it...if they knew it was true don't you think that they would be in Church. In my experience, if you can get to the root of the issue, it is that they don't believe that it is **true!**

Getting back to my earlier experiences, whenever I talked to people about their faith it went something like this: "Why do you believe this stuff?" 'Because I know deep down inside that it's true' "But how do you really know that it's true?" 'Because I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God' "So how do you know the Bible is true?" 'Because I've seen how it's changed my life and others' "No, how do you know it's true?" 'I just know' "So it's true for you" 'No, it's true for

everyone' "but how do you now that?" 'Because the Bible.....' To me, and most skeptics, this was circular reasoning and only proved that the believer had an irrational faith.

But today when someone asks me about my beliefs, I tell them I believe because it is true, factually true. Now this may surprise the people I'm taking to (including Christians) but if your confident in what you know to be true, then it is much easier, in my experience, to share this with people and much less threatening than sharing your feelings, especially for men. The goal is not to convince people but to just plant the seed of doubt that they might question what they believe so that their God given curiosity might take over. From there, it's up to them and the, as the Apostle John puts it, "the Spirit of Truth".

Lastly, and probably the most important, you need to learn these truths so that you can teach your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or any child over which you have influence. You see, rarely is this information taught in Sunday school or church. Why? I'm not sure, but it is not. It took me 40 years to discover this information on my own when it could have been taught to me at Church!

Today, more than ever, children need to be able to defend their faith. The world is antagonistic toward Christianity. Children are coming to this battle between their faith and secularism unarmed and are losing the battle. There is a statistic I've heard mentioned that over 80% of professing Christians entering college, leave as non-believers. This is an amazing statistic that illustrates how woefully unprepared our children are. While some will come back to their faith later in life, many won't... so why take the chance? For this reason and this reason alone, I hope that you will take the time and effort to learn the irrefutable truths that are the foundation of the Christian faith.

To that end, we have started a book ministry here at the Morse Church. I am sure some of you noticed a table with books on it as you walked in. Those books have been donated to the church and are yours to read, pass out or to do whatever you want with them. It is our hope that this these books will answer questions you have, strengthen your faith or just maybe start you on an incredible journey that I can guaranty you will not regret.

(Close in prayer).

Heavenly Father, Creator of everything there is and everything we are. Open our hearts and our minds to the truth of your Creation, the truth your Word and the truth your Son, Christ Jesus. Amen

## **Reading Suggestions**

*I Don't Have Enough Faith to be An Atheist*, by Frank Turek, and Norman L. Geisler, PhD.

*Case for Faith*, by Lee Stroebel

*Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis

*The Source*, by John Clayton and Nils Jansma

*Darwin on Trial*, by Philip Johnson

*Darwin's Black Box*, by Michael Behe, PhD.

*Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos is Designed for Discovery*, by Guillermo Gonzalez, PhD., and Jay W. Richards, PhD.

*In The Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter and the Early Church*, by Paul L. Maier

*The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions about Intelligent Design*, by William A. Dembski, PhD.

*How to Stay Christian in College*, by J. Budziszewski, PhD.

*Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics*, by R. C. Sproul, PhD.

*The Real Face of Atheism*, by Ravi Zacharias