

# Dialogues with disbelief

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier ([www.thefaithkit.org](http://www.thefaithkit.org))  
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## Believe in God?

The skeptic says: “I don’t believe in God because you can’t prove that he exists.”

The believer responds: “You are measuring faith with the wrong ruler. You are looking for ‘proof’ when proof is something we seek—though in very different forms!—in math and science. But math and science are meant to tell us *about* the world, how it works, and not to answer the huge questions: Where is the world from? Why is it here? The answer to these questions is never a matter of mere counting or just looking, it is the judgment of our whole spirit about the meaning of the whole of reality. This experience of our spirit does not lend itself to ‘proof’ but it does give us something we can be sure of.”

“I have a spirit and I’m not sure.”

“Maybe not, but it is also human experience that ideas sometimes run into obstacles, and it is easy to understand how a person who is looking for mathematical or scientific proof when it comes to matters of faith will have a hard time getting the message of his spiritual experience.”

“All your talk about spiritual experience is just your excuse for believing what you want to believe.”

“No, actually, there are many things that all of us know as the result of our whole life’s experience. For example, we know that we exist—even though I can’t prove I exist to you. We know that we exist in a world that is bigger than we are—even though we can’t prove that either. All of us know that the world has its rules; “faith” in this is the basis of science! Most of us know that the world can’t just be here; it must have come from somewhere; there is a God.”

## Believe in Heaven?

The skeptic says: “Your belief in heaven is based on fear.”

The believer comes back: “No, it’s not that my faith is based on fear, my fear is based on faith. In other words, death is so terrible because we were made for life with God.”

The skeptic counters: I don’t believe and I’m not afraid.”

The believer wonders aloud: “Maybe, but few of those who say this have really faced death—not even in their minds. Today people are good at talking about it without thinking about it.”

“Not me.”

“Well, maybe, but the human spirit wants to live—forever. The human spirit wants to love forever. The human spirit wants to make a difference that is a difference, and not just something to keep me busy while I’m here. And the human spirit is not happy about those who have died, and those who never really got a chance to live. If this is all there is, the human spirit doesn’t belong here. We cannot feel, or be, all we were made to feel and be.”

## Sin?

The skeptic says: “You people have no business telling other people what is wrong and what is right.”

The believer says: “You do it. You are doing it right now. And you also do it when you want a killer locked away, and likewise a person who molests children, or the guy that broke into your house.”

“That’s different. In those cases one person is invading another person’s life.”

“So this is the only rule that makes right or wrong?”

Silence.

“Aren’t you also saying that life is a right, and private property, and that it is wrong to confuse children, etc.”

Silence.

“And why are these things ‘wrong’? If I can get away with them, and I don’t care what you think about it, how are they still ‘wrong’ for me?”

Silence.

“In fact, faith says that if we are ever going to talk about right and wrong we must first be clear about why we are here, in this world; what is the purpose of life? Faith says that the purpose of life is preparation for life with God. Faith says we do this by a life of faith and love, and helping others to do the same. Faith says that because of the way God made us, certain things are bound to help us grow, while other things will not, or worse. This

is what makes right or wrong. It is the only thing that can stand up to someone who says: 'That's your opinion; I don't care.'

## So Why Are We Here?

The skeptic says: "The purpose of life is preparation for life with God." And then he asks: "Why would we need to prepare?"

The believer responds: "Well, first of all, let us notice, we *are* here. We know that we were made to live with God, and we see that we are not there yet. This must mean that we are here to do something before we see God. This is how we know that we are here to prepare."

The believer continues: "And what do we do here, we who are born as babies? What do we do here? We grow. And what, in our experience, is the best thing we can grow into? Love. And doesn't love make us more like God? And wouldn't being more like God help us to see God better when finally He makes it possible for us to see Him? And doesn't this mean that we have had something to do with getting to heaven, even becoming the person we will be there? And isn't it better when we have been involved in making us who we are? Isn't that a great thing for God to give us?"

"Nice little argument, but is this thing that you say that we get, is it really worth the suffering that we have to go through here?"

"If God is God, it must be. And we can understand this. Already, here on earth we experience that going through hard things often gives us better things later, so that we say, 'it was hard but I'm glad I went through it.' We expect this in heaven. We expect that life with God will be so great that whatever we went through to get there will be more than worth it."

## So, If It's So Important...

The skeptic says: "So, if it's so important what we do, why is it that so much that makes us who we are we do *not* choose, what we got from our families, what other people did to us, accidents...?"

The believer responds: "I guess that looks bad, but it's really the best news of all. You see, it is true that all of us were made ultimately by events not of our own choosing, but what's behind these events is not luck, it is God who had to know what would come from what He created, and in creating put into action a plan for everything that would ever happen. This includes everything that has ever happened to all of us, and also our response. This

way He gets us to be the people He wants us to be—everyone someone different—and we did participate in our own creation.”

“So we are not free?”

“What does freedom mean? Freedom to do things ‘out-of-the-blue’ in ways that surprise even God? No, freedom means that we respond to things as the persons we are, and this response changes us, and a lifetime of this is our participation in our own creation.”

## If God Has a Plan...

The skeptic asks: “If God has planned everything that happens does this mean he wanted... September 11?!”

The believer responds: “It depends on what you mean by ‘wanted.’ If ‘wanted’ means ‘liked,’ or ‘wants to keep on happening,’ the answer is no. But if ‘wanted’ means ‘used’ as part of the struggle we need to go through as His family in order to be prepared to share His life as richly as we might, then the answer is yes.”

The skeptic counters: “What about the fact that so many people got their lives cut short—according to God’s plan? What about the fact that so many people are born into impossible situations—according to God’s plan?!”

The believer has a question of his own: “What about the fact that everything we have is owed to the lives and deaths of people of times past who had no chance whatsoever to grow into the kind of faith we are talking about today? Don’t you see: We are in this together! No one has created him or herself from nothing. The lives of all of us are owed to history and people all around us now. That is why we are going to share God’s life as a family where all of us are going to be richer for the holiness that each of us brings into heaven. This is how we make sense of God’s plan when it doesn’t otherwise look fair.”

## Fair?

The skeptic asks: “How can it be fair that all of us will share equally in everything the human family gets from God?”

The believer responds: “Well, isn’t that the way it always is in families? Isn’t that the way people want it to be when they love each other like in families?”

“Then why should I try hard when I can see that other people are doing less?”

“First of all, you don’t really know what others are doing, or what others have been given, or what will come from the lives that others were asked to live. Besides, if holiness is about love, then if I am working at it solely for *my* reward, then what I was doing isn’t really love, is it? The bottom line: You do better, then you *and the rest of us* will forever be richer. And when others do better you are richer too.”

“It still doesn’t seem fair.”

“You mean it seems more fair that God should have given you more to learn from... you mean it seems more fair that you should get more because you were born into a world where others had already done the work of inventing language, and leisure, and made it possible to grow more than they could ever have imagined?”

## Who’s Getting Away with Anything?

The skeptic says: “You mean a \_\_\_\_\_ (notorious sinner of some sort) goes to heaven the same as me? It isn’t fair.”

The believer responds: “You think it’s not fair because you think the \_\_\_\_\_ is getting away with something. But what he is getting away with? He might not get caught—then again, he might get caught, and he certainly has to live with knowing he might get caught—but even before this he has paid a terrible price for his sins.”

“Faith is its own reward. People with faith have so much more than anyone without it. People with faith are more alive. Their every experience means more. They can afford to be reflective. They also have a peace, with things and with themselves, that no one without faith can even imagine. The person without faith might be able to buy a bigger house, or more expensive toys, but he is hardly able to enjoy them well. He can laugh a lot at parties, but this is just booze; and he needs his booze just to get by. He can have cheap relationships; but this is exactly what he has—cheap, phony, loveless relationships.”

“People like that don’t seem to think it’s so bad.”

“Well, they certainly never *say* it. And they might not even know it. But they still live a low life, and they will still die a low death.

“So why did God give them such a lousy preparation for heaven?”

“Basically, for the same reason that so many of history’s poor and sad were given lives they lived—so that our human family would have something to work on, so that our human family would be able to grow and thus participate in our own creation.”