Religious Studies

GCSE REVISION BOOKLET

Theme C: Existence of God
How to answer the GCSE Exam Questions

NEVER WRITE OUT THE QUESTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of marks</th>
<th>Command word</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Number of minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Which one of...</td>
<td>Circle / tick or write the correct word</td>
<td>1 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Name two</td>
<td>NO sentence required. Keep it as brief as possible</td>
<td>1 min</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give two</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explain ... influences Explain...similar...contrasting</td>
<td>Number your points: 1.Point Explain / develop 2.Point Explain / develop</td>
<td>4 min</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Could ask for main religious tradition of Great Britain = CHRISTIANITY)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Explain.... Refer to sources of wisdom or authority in your answer</td>
<td>1.Point Explain / develop 2.Point Explain / develop Include a religious teaching</td>
<td>4 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>For (including religious views) Evaluate Against (including religious views) Evaluate Conclusion (based on the for and against information)</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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12 mark question key words / phrases

- Furthermore
- In addition
- Convincingly
- A strong argument is
- A weaker argument is
- This means that
- This evidence is convincing because
- Consequently
- Similarly
- In contrast
- Despite this
- Of less importance
- Most importantly
- As can be seen by
- Finally

Themes for 4 mark ‘main religious tradition of Great Britain’ questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion and families</th>
<th>Contraception, sex before marriage, homosexual relationships</th>
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<td>Religion and life</td>
<td>Abortion, euthanasia, animal experimentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion, crime and punishment</td>
<td>Corporal punishment, death penalty, forgiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion, peace and conflict</td>
<td>(Violence, weapons of mass destruction, pacifism)</td>
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• Follow all quotes with: this means that / this shows that... Therefore (go back to the question)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Existence of God Checklist</strong></th>
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<td><strong>I can describe and explain</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Design Argument</td>
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<td>The First Cause Argument</td>
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<td>The Argument from Miracles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evil and Suffering as an Argument Against the Existence of God</td>
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<td>Further Arguments against the Existence of God</td>
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<td>Special revelation as a Source of Knowledge about God</td>
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<td>Experience as a source of Knowledge about God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enlightenment as a Source of Knowledge about God</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Revelation</td>
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<td>Scripture as a source of Knowledge about God</td>
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Key Vocab

Agnostic  someone who thinks there is not enough evidence for belief in God.

Atheist  a person that believes that God does not exist

Conversion  when your life is changed by giving yourself to God

Creation  the act by which God brought the universe into being

Design Argument  the argument that God designed the universe, because everything is so intricately made in its detail that it could not have happened by chance.

Enlightenment  the gaining of true knowledge about God or self, usually through meditation or self-discipline.

Eternal  without beginning or end

First Cause Argument  also called the Cosmological Argument; the argument that there has to be an uncaused cause that made everything happen, otherwise there would be nothing now.

Free Will  the idea that human beings are free to make their own choices

General revelation  God making himself known through ordinary, common human experience

Immanent  the idea that God is present in and involved with life on earth and in the universe.

Impersonal nature (of God)  the idea that God has no ‘human’ characteristics, is unknowable and mysterious, more like and idea or force.

Miracle  something which seems to break the law of science and makes you think only God could have done it.

Moral evil  actions done by humans which cause suffering

Nature  the physical world including plants, animals and landscape, the environment and natural world.

Natural evil  things like earthquakes and floods which cause suffering and have nothing to do with humans.

Numinous  the feeling you get when you are in a great cathedral or look at the stars and feel there is something much greater than you.

Omni-benevolent  the belief that God is all-good

Omnipotent  the belief that God is all-powerful/can do anything

Omniscient  the belief that God knows everything that has happened and that is going to happen.

Personal nature (of God)  the idea that God is an individual or person with whom people are able to have a relationship or feel close.

Prayer  an attempt to contact God, usually through words

Proof  evidence that supports the truth of something

Faith  a commitment to something that goes beyond proof or knowledge, especially used about God and religion.

Revelation  God showing himself to believers, this is the only way anybody can really know anything about God.
Scripture  the sacred writing of a religion, for Christians these are the Old and New Testament

Special revelation  God making himself known through direct personal experience or an unusual specific event

Suffering  when people have to face and live with unpleasant events or conditions

Theist  a person who believes in God

Transcendent  the idea that God is beyond and outside life on earth and the universe.

Ultimate reality  the supreme, final, fundamental power in all reality

Vision  seeing something especially in a dream or trance that shows something about the nature of God or the afterlife.

**Religious upbringing and belief in God**

If someone is brought up by religious parents, then they will be encouraged to believe in God from the beginning of their life.

- They will be taken to worship God with their parents
- They will be taught to pray to God every day
- They will be expected to thank God and remember God’s good gifts at various religious festivals
- They are likely to go to a school where everyone believes in God and so they are expected to believe in God.

In answering questions, you will need to refer to a specific religion eg, in Christianity you should illustrate by referring to baptism, Christmas, Easter, Sunday Schools etc.

**Religious experience and belief in God**

Religious experience means the ways in which people come into direct contact with God. It can be just a feeling you get when you are in a holy building or say your prayers, or even look up at the stars, and feel in the presence of something greater than yourself. This is called the numinous.

It can be a more definite feeling of God’s presence which makes you much more religious and changes your life (e.g St Paul on the road to Damascus). This is called a conversion experience.

It can be believing that a miracle has happened eg., when someone is cured of an incurable disease after prayers being said for them or after something else connected with religion.

It can be having a prayer answered e.g. someone prays for God to help them out of a problem and the problem disappears.

Any of these experiences are almost certain to lead the person who experiences them to believe in God.

**Appearance of the world and belief in God**

Some people think the way the world works shows that God must exist:

The universe seems to be designed:

- The way the universe works according to laws such as gravity;
- The way humans grow from a tiny blueprint of DNA etc
- The way the complex mechanism of the eye allows people to see;
- The way the Big Bang worked with the laws of science to produce a universe of order.
If something is designed, it must have a designer. The only possible designer of the universe is God, therefore, they believe, God must exist.

(Newton, Aquinas, Tennant)

Arguments Against the design Argument

- Because of natural selection design is a matter of chance over time.
- Why is there so much suffering if God is a good designer?
- The universe exists to support life, design is an illusion.

The universe needs a cause:

- Science says everything has a cause or an explanation,
- Therefore, the universe itself must have a cause,
- Only God could be the cause of the universe,
- Therefore, God must exist.

Arguments against the First Cause Argument

- If everything needs a cause why doesn’t God?
- If God can be eternal why can’t the universe?
- The Big Bang was a random event not caused by God
- Religious creation stories are just myths

Other reasons for believing in God

Special revelation and Enlightenment

Every religion accepts that there is an ultimate reality that is eternal and unchanging. Christians describe this reality as a personal being who makes himself known in three persons.

Christians say God can be known by special revelations such as dreams, visions, prophecies and miracles. Visions come as pictures or an image. St Paul had such a vision.

General revelation

This can be through things like nature – the feeling of awe and wonder, a person’s conscience or reason, the scriptures – whether it is taken as literal or to be interpreted, and worship and the example of the lives of religious leaders.

Many people cannot believe that people are here by chance. They think that life must have a meaning and purpose. Only God and life after death can give life meaning. So God must exist.

The fact that there are religions which seem to believe a lot of the same things about God, and that so many people believe in God shows that God must exist. All those people and religions cannot be wrong.

Why some people do not believe in God

1. Scientific explanations of the world can lead people to become agnostic (not sure whether God exists) or atheists (believing that God does not exist). Science now explains the world and the universe much better than religion. Also the discoveries of astronomy and astronauts going into space make it difficult to think of anywhere God could be.

2. Problems with miracles can lead people to become agnostics or atheists. Why would God send miracles for a few people, but allow thousands to starve to death and millions to die in the Holocaust? Also most miracles can now be explained.
3. Unanswered prayers can lead people to become agnostic or atheists. God is supposed to care for those who worship him and answer prayers, but if someone prays for God to help a dying child and the child dies, that person may well become agnostic or atheist.

4. Evil and suffering in the world lead some people to become agnostics or atheists. People suffer from such things as disease, starvation, earthquakes and wars. If God is good, he must want to get rid of such things. If God is all-powerful (omnipotent), he must be able to get rid of such things. The fact that these things continue to exist leads some people to believe that there is no God.

The problem of evil and suffering

Religious believers find the existence of evil and suffering a problem because:

- They believe that God is good (benevolent), but if God is good, he ought not to want evil and suffering in his world;
- They believe that God has the power to do anything (omnipotent), but if God is all-powerful, he must be able to get rid of evil and suffering from the world he created;
- However, there is evil and suffering in the world, and so either God is not good, or God is not all-powerful, or God does not exist.

You must learn the response of one religion to the problem of evil and suffering.

Response of Christianity to evil and suffering

1. Many Christians respond to the problem by believing that God knows the answer, but people cannot. Jesus showed us that God wants us to fight against evil and suffering, so they follow the example of Jesus and pray for those who suffer and give them practical help whenever possible.

2. Some Christians think that God could not give humans free will unless they had the chance to do evil things (being free is part of being made in God’s image). Humans have used their free will to do evil things and this has brought suffering into the world. So evil and suffering is the fault of humans not God.

3. Other Christians believe that this life is a sort of test in which people prepare their souls for heaven. If there was no evil and suffering, then they would not be able to develop as good people, because being good involves helping those who suffer and fighting against evil. If people follow the Christian way then their souls will become good and God will send them to heaven when they die.

All Christians believe they must respond to suffering by trying to help those who suffer and to evil by fighting against it.

Why some people do not believe in God

1. Scientific explanations of the world can lead people to become Gnostic (not sure whether God exists) or atheists (believing that God does not exist).

Many people believe in God because they think that God is the only explanation of how the universe came into being. However, science now explains the world and the universe much better than religion. For example, the Big Bang and evolution is much more believable than Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve and does not need there to be a God.
Science also makes it difficult to believe in the Bible which talks about God above the sky and God performing miracles to which science gives natural explanations. The discoveries of astronomy and astronauts going into space make it difficult to thin of anywhere God could be – this also applies to the idea of life after death and where heaven could be.

2. Problems with miracles can lead people to become agnostic or atheist.

Many people believe in God because they believe that miracles have occurred and God is the only explanation, so God must exist e.g. Jesus rising from the dead. However, most miracles can now be explained, or shown to be based on insufficient evidence. Even if miracles cannot be explained, why would a good God just help one or two people with miracles and not help all the other people who need a miracle?

3. Unanswered prayers can lead people to become agnostic or atheists.

God is supposed to care for those who worship him and answer prayers. However, religious people are praying for peace and an end to starvation all the time and yet these things still exist.

Many religious believers become agnostics or atheists because their prayers are not answered by God.

1. Evil and suffering in the world lead some people to become agnostics or atheists.

The world has major design flaws which cause earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, diseases, floods and droughts. These cause massive amounts of human suffering which make it seem that if God did create the universe, he is either evil or useless or, more likely, does not exist.

People suffer from diseases, starvation, wars. If God is good, he must want to get rid of such things. If God is all-powerful (omnipotent), he must be able to get rid of such things.

The fact that these things continue to exist leads some people to believe that there is no God.

Miracles

Problems of believing in miracles

1. All miracles require you to believe in the evidence of eyewitnesses and we all know that people can be mistaken about what they have seen and heard, and that some very responsible people do tell lies if it is to their benefit.

2. Science can now explain many miracles, so perhaps in the future it will be possible to explain all miracles.

3. It seems more sensible to look for a natural explanation than to think God must have done it.

4. Illusionists like Paul Daniels can do wonderful tricks which seem to have no explanation, but they tell us they are tricks. Maybe miracles are just tricks.

5. If God performs miracles, he must be evil, because if he could feed 5000 people with five loaves and to fishes (for example) why doesn’t he use a miracle to feed all the starving people? If he can save one child from dying, why didn’t he stop Baby P being killed?
Miracles lead people to believe in God

1. Miracles are always going to convince the people who witness them. If your friend is dying from cancer, and you pray for her and she recovers, you will believe it was a miracle and it will help you to believe in God.

2. Miracles could be signs from God to help us to believe in him.

3. To believe that miracles are possible can help people to get through very bad times.

4. Most people do not blame God when things go wrong, they believe that God only uses miracles as signs and that bad things happen because of humans refusing to follow God’s commands.

4 Mark Questions (Add religious reason for 5)

Explain an argument for God’s existence based on the appearance of design in the world.
Explain why such things as earthquakes, floods and volcanoes may make it difficult to believe in God.
Outline the First cause theory.
Explain why the existence of evil and suffering may cause problems for people who believe in God.
Choose one religion and explain how its followers respond to unanswered prayers.
Explain how a religious upbringing may lead to or support belief in God.

12 Mark Questions
‘If God really loved religious people, he would not let them suffer.’
‘God must exist because so many people believe in him.’
‘Ideas like the Big Bang make it impossible to believe in God.’
‘Children should follow the religion of their parents.’
‘Miracles don’t happen today.’
‘Religious schools offer the best education.’
‘You don’t have to be religious to have a religious experience.’
‘RE lessons make you believe in God.’
‘There is plenty of evidence that God exists.’
‘God answers everyone’s prayers.’
‘Unanswered prayers prove that God does not exist.’
‘Religious programmes on television or radio encourage people to believe in God.’