



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Against All Odds – Part 1
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Main Idea – We accept Jesus and His sacrifice through faith. However, it is good to know there is a remarkable amount of factual evidence that supports our beliefs. The Bible is essentially a history book – supported by evidence – of God’s interaction with His creation.

Jesus’ impact on history

- Sometimes we can get so caught up in our own lives that we don’t see a bigger, global perspective.
- In addition to Jesus being important to you personally, His time here on earth has had enormous influence on the entire planet.
- To have a relationship with God that will last all our lives, we need to have knowledge of God, and we need to have personal experiences with God.

Knowledge about Jesus

- Jesus is a man whom secular history acknowledges.
- Tacitus was a Roman historian. He was a secular, non-Christian writer from shortly after 100ad. In one of his documents he referred to the impact of the early Christians on the Roman Empire, to Pontius Pilate, and to Jesus.
 - From Annals 15.44 – “But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius . . .”
- That is just one example of thousands of historical pieces of evidence that support what is written in Scripture.
- Christians can be confident that what the Bible says is abundantly supported by physical evidence. (*Pastor Stephen has provided several online sources at the end of this outline for more of this type of information.*)
- Therefore, we should not feel we have to apologize, or become defensive, when someone who doesn’t know any better refers to the Bible as simply stories.
- Scripture is fully able to defend its own record. What it has prophesied has always come true.

Old Testament prophecies about Jesus

- The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies that specifically describe something about the Messiah, that came to pass with Jesus. Here are just a handful:
- **Psalms 22:16-18 – For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.**
- **Micah 5:2 – But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.**
- **Isaiah 7:14 – Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**
- **Zechariah 9:9 – Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.**
- **Zechariah 11:12-13 – Then I said to them, “If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.” So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter” – that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.**
- **Zechariah 13:6 – And one will say to him, “What are these wounds between your arms?” Then he will answer, “Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”**
- **(predicting John the Baptist) Malachi 3:1 – “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.**
- The odds that all those prophecies could actually happen with one individual – and having been declared across over 1000 years of time by different prophets – is beyond comprehension. Those prophecies did not come true by random chance. God ordained them.
- In the New Testament, the Book of Acts records advice that a Pharisee named Gamaliel gave to a council of religious leaders. Gamaliel advised against persecuting the Christians because other false prophets had claimed to be the Messiah in the past. Gamaliel said that – like before – if Jesus was a false prophet, the Christians would soon disappear. But, if Jesus was who he said he was, then the council would actually be working against God if it continued to arrest Christians. **Acts 5: 36-39 – “For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined**

him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.”

- The other men Gamaliel referred to died and remained buried. Jesus, however, did not remain buried. And, the church of Jesus did not disappear.

The Bible is a history book

- The Bible is a group of documents that God, through humans, wrote and gathered together into a single collection.
- The Bible is a history of God’s interaction with His creation on earth.
- God has been involved with all history from the beginning, and will eternally stay involved. **Revelation 1:8 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**
- Much of the Bible’s prophecy has already happened. Some prophecy is yet to take place. For example, **Romans 14:11 – For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”** will happen when Jesus returns.

God is prophetically involved with your life

- God is God of the entire universe. He is also God of the smallest details of your life.
- Anything He has placed in your heart will come to pass – it will happen. **Proverbs 3: 5-6 – Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.**
- When God gave you a promise, He also gave you the faith to believe it. That faith inside you is its own kind of physical evidence. **Hebrews 11:1 – Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**
- Your faith right now is the evidence of prophetic things that haven’t yet happened that He will bring through you.

For further research

- Here are resources that give more information about the content of this message:
- <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2012/07/27/400-Prophecies-of-Christ-in-the-Old-Testament.aspx>
- <http://christinprophecy.org/articles/applying-the-science-of-probability-to-the-scriptures/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2016/02/when-was-each-book-of-the-bible-written/>
- <https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog-and-stories/old-testament-prophecies.html>
- Tacitus: Annals 15.44. <http://www.tektonics.org/jesusexist/tacitus.php>

Reflective Questions for Against All Odds

1. Why is it a good thing to know what we believe by faith is also supported by physical evidence?
2. How can you use this knowledge to help someone who believes the Bible is a collection of myths?
3. Do you have a testimony about a time God put something in your heart ahead of time, and then it came true?
4. Has God put something in your heart now that hasn't yet come true? If so, how does His faithfulness to all His past prophecies encourage you today?