

“If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to believe in him?”

1. Understanding the question

1) “God” – From the question being asked, it is to be assumed that by “God” is meant “Creator”, and also as having personality.

2) “us” - This could refer to a) all mankind, or to b) a particular group / country / generation, or c) the individual posing the question, making it wider than themselves as they perceive that others have similar difficulties to their own.

Answering the question will address all three.

3) “believe in” – To “believe in” God can refer to two different things, therefore the question can be about two related but very different subjects. An answer must therefore seek to address both the potential enquiries.

To “believe in God” can mean the acknowledgement that God exists, so the question would then be,

“If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to acknowledge that he exists?”

To “believe in God” can also mean to engage with God, to have a meaningful relationship with him.

So the question would then be,

“If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to engage meaningfully with him?”

2. The Reason for the Question

There are different reasons why the question could be posed.

- to challenge people who are seeking to persuade others to adopt their beliefs.
- to deny God’s existence.
- to be angry at or to take issue with God’s perceived dealings.
- to find the way to acknowledge /engage with God, having found that difficult previously.

a) To challenge people who are seeking to persuade others to adopt their beliefs.

It appears to be a very good question for this purpose, as behind what seems at first a fairly straightforward question lies the heart of the issue of the relationship between God and people.

b) To deny God’s existence.

The argument of the questioner might be:

It is difficult for us to believe in God.

If God existed, he would want us to believe in him and therefore he would not make it difficult for us to do so.

Since it is more difficult than we would expect it to be if God existed, then it must be that God does not exist.

This argument can be questioned thus:

- Who are the “us” about whom it is said that it is difficult to believe in God? There have always been and there still are many who would not agree with the premise that it is difficult to believe in God.

- The idea that if God existed he would want us to acknowledge his existence and engage or relate meaningfully with him, is taken from the belief system of those who

believe such to be true. There is no reason philosophically why the Creator should necessarily seek our acknowledgement or engagement. There are other creatures who we do not expect to acknowledge or knowingly engage meaningfully with God.

- The level of perceived difficulty in believing in God is somewhat subjective in the use of the phrase “so difficult”. How could there be an objective judgement of how much difficulty would signify an unacceptable level by which to acknowledge or deny God’s existence?

c) To be angry at or to take issue with God’s perceived dealings.

This kind of questioning can arise when a person has faced a difficult situation and their perception is that God has not engaged with them in that situation as they would have hoped or expected. Therefore it is to them in their situation **as if** God did not exist, in that they were not aware of his intervention.

Their use of the question is saying, “God, if you are there, why didn’t you do something?”

It is not a questioning or a doubting of God’s existence, but rather a dissatisfaction or frustration at his dealings.

There can be many reasons for such a perception, and to be able to propose a more detailed answer for a particular situation, then that situation would need to be known by the answerer.

It would mean that the question to be answered would move to,

“Why, since God is there, did he not intervene in my situation in the way I looked for, so leaving me now with a difficulty in relating to him?”

This may be a difficult question to answer adequately, but it is not an impossible one to deal with.

Although we cannot deal here with the specifics of such a case, the content of the answer as expounded later can form the basis for answering a particular situation.

d) To find the way to acknowledge /engage with God, having found that difficult previously.

There are then two things revealed in the wording of the question:

i) that the questioner has difficulty in acknowledging /engaging with God.

ii) that the questioner attributes or blames that difficulty on the action or inaction of God.

There is in the way that the question is framed the premise that the perceived difficulty (“so difficult to”) is caused by God (“why does **he** make it”).

3. The questions raised by the question

On the basis that has been previously outlined in 2.b) that the question cannot be taken as a valid argument against the existence of God, we now examine the question as:

Why does God make it so difficult for us to believe in him?

This can refer to two questions namely:

Why does he make it so difficult for us to **acknowledge** him?

Why does he make it so difficult for us to **engage** with him?

And for each of these questions there is, as has already been stated, the question as to whom the “us” refers, and the need to address each of the possible categories:

a) all mankind b) a particular group c) an individual.

This leads us to these questions:

Is it difficult for mankind in general to acknowledge God’s existence?

Is it difficult for particular groups of people to acknowledge God’s existence?

Is it difficult for particular individuals to acknowledge God’s existence?

Is it difficult for mankind in general to engage meaningfully with God?

Is it difficult for particular groups of people to engage meaningfully with God?

Is it difficult for particular individuals to engage meaningfully with God?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then is that difficulty more than could be reasonably expected? (referring to the phrase “so difficult”)

Also, if the answer to any of these questions is yes, why does that condition exist?

It does not necessarily follow that such a condition is because “God made it so”. It could be that God has made it easy but there are other things which oppose or hinder.

Therefore the question is then:

Is any difficulty in either acknowledging God’s existence or engaging meaningfully with him because God has made it so, and if not, what is the explanation for any difficulties that might be experienced in either acknowledging God’s existence or in engaging meaningfully with him?

Is it difficult for mankind in general to acknowledge God’s existence?

All the evidence points in the opposite direction, that in general, people throughout the world through many ages have acknowledged God’s existence, even though their perception of God’s attributes and character vary immensely.

Even in Britain which is far less “religious” than it has been, “belief in God” in the 1990s although declining, still stood at 67% with a further 7% unsure.

It is interesting to note that in countries (like the soviet bloc) where there has been a deliberate and intense attempt to “educate” people to believe in the non-existence of God, those plans have failed miserably.

Is it difficult for particular groups of people to acknowledge God’s existence?

There may be particular groups of people among whom acknowledgement of God’s existence is less prevalent than among others, but this does not suggest that such a condition in brought about deliberately by God.

These days “scientists” are said to be a group who do not acknowledge God’s existence. But this is a false claim as there are many leading scientists in different fields who do believe in God’s existence.

Many who do claim not to believe in God's existence, look back to Charles Darwin as the one who "did away" with a belief in the existence of God.

It is interesting to read what his stated views were on the subject.

"There is no evidence that man was aboriginally endowed with the ennobling belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God ...*(my comment – neither is there any evidence that he wasn't! We weren't around at the time)*

The question is of course wholly distinct from the higher one, whether there exists a Creator and Ruler of the universe: and this has been answered in the affirmative by some of the highest intellects that have ever lived.

If however, we include under the term "religion" the belief in unseen or spiritual agencies, the case is wholly different; for this belief seems to be universal with the less civilised races."

(page 143 The Descent of Man).

His reasoning is that the more civilised people are, the more they believe in God:

"The idea of a universal and **beneficent** *(my emphasis)* Creator does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long-continued culture." (page 936)

Those who look to Darwin for their non-God position should note his humble statement in his general summary and conclusion of his book, The Descent of Man:

"Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt will be proved erroneous."

On the matter of any externally imposed "difficulty" of belief to particular groups who have adopted an atheistic stance, their position seems to be that they, having thought things through, have decided that for them there is not God. It appears to be, for whatever reason, a freely **chosen** position. It is not common to hear an atheist expressing:

"There is no God, but how I wish there was one, and how I wish I could acknowledge his existence, if he did have existence, and how I wish I could engage meaningfully with him if he was there to be meaningfully engaged with. Why has this non-existent God forced me to be an atheist?"

Is it difficult for particular individuals to acknowledge God's existence?

It is clear that some individuals find difficulty in acknowledging God's existence. But what is behind that lack of acknowledgement can be quite varied.

There are three categories of people about whom it may be said that they have difficulty in acknowledging God's existence:

1) There are those who may not acknowledge God's existence to others, but who do have a personal belief that God exists. Therefore their difficulty is not in their belief but in the open acknowledgement of that belief.

2) There are those who are not consciously aware in their normal life of the existence of God, and therefore might say (and even think themselves) that they do not believe in the existence of God. However, at some circumstance of life, in conditions of fear, threat, danger, trauma, tragedy (or even in some overwhelming experience of great joy) they can find themselves calling on God thus signifying a deeper than conscious acceptance of God's existence.

3) There are those who, as far as can be ascertained, honestly do not believe in the existence of God or who are not sure whether or not God exists, and who say that for them it is difficult to accept that there could be God.

For those in the category 1), the reason for a difficulty in acknowledgement can come from peer pressure in the company of others who deny or ridicule belief in God. Fear of rejection and an inability to defend a position of belief in God makes it difficult to openly acknowledge belief.

Such a person may also not acknowledge their belief to those who are committed to a meaningful engagement with God, as they do not want to face the challenge that such people bring them – “If you know that God exists, you ought to be seeking meaningful relationship with him”. Denying a belief in God’s existence can be an avoiding tactic.

For those in category 2), it perhaps can be said that it is not so much that they have a difficulty in acknowledging God’s existence, but rather that for them it is easy to live their normal life as if God did not exist.

For category 3), it may be that they have given little conscious thought to the issue of whether or not God exists. It could be that their upbringing has had in it little reference to the existence of God from those around them, so that their world view has developed unintentionally as one in which God does not exist.

For others in this category their stated lack of belief in the existence of God is based on their perception that they have not had a personal encounter with God, and therefore to them God’s existence or lack of it has no bearing on their lives.

It is worth mentioning that **there are some who confuse in their own thinking the issue of whether God exists and the issue of whether they would choose to engage with him.**

It is a strangely common argument where it is said, “I can’t believe in a God (meaning believing in his existence) who would allow suffering like (and then they list whatever it is on their minds – e.g. wars, natural disasters, children suffering, personal tragedy) and who wouldn’t do anything about.....”

They thus show that they have a concept to which they are committed regarding the character of God if he existed, which in their perception, circumstances seem to contradict. It is strange how such people can exhibit such emotion and anger regarding a non-existent God.

It could be that they misunderstand their own position. Their conclusion from their reasoning - that God does not exist because this non-existent God does not behave in the way that they would expect him to if he did exist, - is not logical.

What appears to underlie their feelings is that since to them God’s dealings in the world do not seem to be in harmony with God being beneficent, they do not want to engage with him. This will have to be further dealt with later under the question, Why does God make it so difficult for us to **engage** with him?

It is clear that the answer to the question,

Is it difficult for particular individuals to acknowledge God’s existence? is **Yes.**

We then are required to look at the question,

“Has God made it difficult for particular individuals to acknowledge his existence?

Reasons have been given for the various difficulties in acknowledging God’s existence which point to what might be described as circumstantial causes rather than any obvious intentional action of God to present a difficulty to particular individuals.

The next area of consideration is then,

“How easy or difficult is it for individuals who do not acknowledge God’s existence to arrive at a change of belief regarding that issue?”

In other words, **though God may not have caused a particular difficulty for individuals to acknowledge his existence, has he made it difficult for them to change from that belief?**

It is clear that there are individuals who change in their belief or lack of belief in God. For instance, according to a 1997 report by “the Sea of Faith” seventy Church of England ministers admitted they no longer believed in God!!! (quoted in UK Religious Trends3)

There are three categories to look at:

1) There are those who do not want to face the issue of God’s existence because they are committed to a way of life of non-engagement with God whether or not God exists.

Where God **might** leave such a person to such a life without intervention cannot be seen as God making it difficult for them.

2) There are those who want to know whether it is right to believe in God’s existence because if God exists they recognise that they want to acknowledge his existence and engage meaningfully with him.

It may be that some such people hit difficulties because they go down routes of exploration that do not lead to a positive outcome. It would be wrong to assume that difficulties coming about by “the blind leading the blind” should be blamed on God.

It is clearly the experience of many who have wanted to know whether God exists that it was much **easier** than anticipated. The often repeated testimony of those whose belief changed was that they prayed something like,

“God, I don’t know if you are there, but if you are, can you reveal yourself to me in such a way as I know.” As a result, their request being answered brought about their acknowledgement of God’s existence.

There are also those who have found that in reading some part of the Bible without previous commitment to its contents that they have “found God” in the process.

3) Further confirming the idea that God seeks to make it easy rather than difficult for those who do not acknowledge his existence to change their belief, is the experience of some who find that they have an unexpected and unsought “encounter with God” which changes their position.

It is interesting to note that such an “encounter” does not necessarily lead to a further engagement with God.

An intriguing description of such an unexpected and unsought encounter is given by Duncan Bannatyne in his autobiography “Anyone Can Do It”. (*Although in this case it was not in the context of a previous denial of God’s existence.*)

Affected emotionally after a day in the orphanage he was helping to set up in Romania, he went outside to cry. He describes it thus:

I went outside and found a quiet place at the side of the house. I couldn't stop the tears, my face was wet, my nose began to run and I was a mess. I had no choice but to let the tears flow; and they just kept pouring out of me and wouldn't stop. After many minutes I began to get the feeling that I wasn't alone.

It was there and then that God said hello.

I felt that I had been consumed by this presence, that something had completely shrouded and taken hold of me. It was unmistakable: I knew who had come and I also knew why. It wasn't a spiritual thing, it was a Christian thing, and I felt I was being told, 'You've arrived, join the faith, be a Christian, this is it.' It was profound, and I stood there, stunned, considering the offer and thinking about what it would mean. I knew I wanted to keep on building up my businesses and I wanted to keep making money, and I also knew I wanted to carry on doing all the things I wasn't proud of – I knew I was never going to be this totally Christian guy going to church on Sundays.

So I said, 'No, I'm not ready.'

And God said, 'OK,' and disappeared.

There is something strangely powerful in such an account from someone who is neither committed (at least at that stage) to engaging meaningfully with God nor is suggesting that anyone else should do so. Neither does he appear to have anything to gain by recounting the experience.

Conclusion regarding difficulties in acknowledging God's existence

We conclude therefore in this section that:

- 1) Where individuals find it difficult to acknowledge the existence of God, this can be explained as being the result of causes not initiated by God.
- 2) God does not place difficulties in the way of a change from unbelief to belief. Rather God appears to be both responsive and proactive in changing people's unbelief to belief.

Thus we have answered the question and the questions raised by the question,

Why does God make it so difficult for us to believe in him?

in relation to its meaning:

Why does he make it so difficult for us to acknowledge his existence?

We now move to the second question and its implications. That is:

Why does God make it so difficult for us to believe in him?

in relation to its meaning:

Why does he make it so difficult for us to engage meaningfully with him?

It is clear that there are many people who do not engage meaningfully with God.

Is that because it is difficult for them to do so, and if so, what is the cause of that difficulty?

1. There are those who do not engage with God because they choose not to.

1) There are those who choose not to engage with God because they are committed to a lifestyle which is not compatible with God's character.

A shorthand description of such people is that they are those who “love darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil” (John 3v19)

It could be said, and would be true of some of these people, that they **do** engage meaningfully with God – but in a relationship of opposition to him rather than harmony with him.

2) There are those who choose not to engage with God because they have a perception of God which makes him in some way off-putting to them.

Among these would be those whose position is, “I can't believe in (engage with) a God who would.....”

There are those who have suffered hurt, trauma or personal tragedy and are angry with God because they believe that either he caused their emotional damage, or that he should have done something to prevent that which caused it.

There are others in a similar position but who, although not expressing anger, find it difficult emotionally to relate to the God who, in their view, is responsible for their personal suffering.

3) There are those who choose not to engage with God because they do not have an awareness that God might want them to engage meaningfully with him.

Although it might be thought that, for instance, people who “go to church” would not be in this category, there are many whose view of God is that he is impersonal in his relationship with the world. He is seen as one who has created, has expectations of how we should live, will judge us after death for the life we have lived, but who does not intervene in daily life or relate personally with us.

4) There are those who choose not to engage with God because they do not feel a need to do so.

They may have no conscious awareness of the involvement of God in their life (this does not preclude actual unnoticed involvement of God in their life), and since either they are reasonably content with their life, or they are not aware of the option of engaging with God, they do not seek such engagement.

There are many in the categories above who are there because of their lack of sought information or the receipt of misinformation from others about the true character and dealings of God, rather than any barrier that God has placed in their way.

It is noteworthy too that the company of people who have found and are committed to a personal positive engagement with God include in their number people who have been converted from each of the categories described – even those who previously were in active opposition to such engagement.

2. There are people who do not claim to engage meaningfully with God, who give some indication that they would be open to doing so, but experience some difficulty in fulfilling that desire.

Among the range of difficulties which might be encountered are:

- 1) The view that God has no desire to engage meaningfully with people, that he expects us to “just get on with life”.
- 2) The view there is some personal weakness, failure, fault, past experience or disposition in themselves which disqualifies them from engaging meaningfully with God. For example: “I’m not good enough”, “I have done too many bad things”, “God wouldn’t be interested in me”, “I’m not worthy”.
- 3) The effect of being in a social environment which does not encourage them to seek to have a meaningful engagement with God, or actively discourages them from such engagement.
- 3) Some religious teaching which puts forward the idea that some demanding process has to be undertaken in order to engage meaningfully with God.
- 4) Lack of relevant accurate information on how to engage with God.
- 5) Spiritual powers resisting and opposing people engaging with God. (More explanation of this later.)
- 6) Some overriding desire, ambition, pressure or influence which diverts them from giving attention to engaging with God.
- 7) A damaged or blocked relationship mechanism. Where a person’s close human relationships have been in some way affected negatively, particularly in the relationship of their father to them, it presents a difficulty for them in their relationship with God. Differentiating relationship with God from relationship with human father needs conscious awareness of how they may be entangled. The idea that God may want to relate to someone as their “father” can result in complicated emotions.
Also if personal human relationships have resulted in a person being hurt deeply, this stands in the way of them easily opening themselves up to trust any new close relationship including engaging with God.

If a questioner raising the question,

Why does God make it so difficult for us to engage meaningfully with him?

is looking for a general answer to why some find it difficult to engage with God, then the above 7 reasons give a range of suggestions, any of which may contribute to the difficulty that someone may face.

None of these reasons look as if they have causes which are obviously initiated by God, although it might be viewed by some that because God has not prevented some of these things, that he in some way bears partial responsibility. However all these difficulties can be answered given a right understanding of God's intention to make himself known to us in such a way that we can engage with him, if we want to, and choose to.

If a questioner raising the question,

Why does God make it so difficult for us to engage meaningfully with him?

is seeking an answer to their personal difficulty in engaging with God, then they might find it useful to look at the 7 suggested reasons, and see which might apply to them, and then follow through with their particular enquiry concerning how that specific difficulty can be addressed and overcome.

Explanation of God's intentions in relation to the original question

It has been shown that the question:

"If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to believe in him?"

may be asked for a variety of reasons, and that if it is "difficult for us to believe in him" (whoever the "us" might be), there can be a variety of reasons which are not the result of God making it so.

In order to complete the answer, it is necessary to propose some explanation of what God does to enable us to acknowledge his existence and to engage meaningfully with him, and so to show whether or not it can be accurately said that he makes it difficult for us to believe in him.

This leads us to the question,

Does God want us to engage meaningfully with him?

The original question implies a positive answer to this question. The implication in the original question is that God wants us to believe in him but he has unexpectedly (to the questioner) put difficulties in the way of that happening.

The only other conclusion that can be taken from the question is that God has made it difficult for us to believe in him because for some unknown reason he does not want us to believe in him.

However, whether or not God wants us to engage meaningfully with him does not depend on us expecting, hoping, or wishing that this is the case (since it could be argued that God as Creator could decide that he does not want engagement with us). Rather we can find the answer to the question in the answer to the next one:

If God wants us to engage meaningfully with him, what has he revealed in order to enable that to happen?

Of course, this immediately presents us with the “problem” that there are many answers proffered to that question by the different religions, cults, sects and individuals – most of which might well lead one to ask:

“If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to believe in him?”

However, God has revealed that he wants us to engage meaningfully with him, and he has shown us what we need to know to enable that to happen. This by necessity indicates the unhelpfulness of any other suggested way which is not in compliance with his revelation.

A person asking the question, **“If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to believe in him?”** may not at this stage know whether the statement of the previous paragraph is true, but since they appear to have the idea that God should not make it difficult for them to believe in him then it seems reasonable to suggest that they should consider a view of God’s dealings which is in line with that thought.

We start with the point that if God is making himself known in such a way that we can engage meaningfully with him, the implication is that there has come about the situation in which our engagement with God has been broken, lacking or prevented. God’s revelation of himself and how we can engage meaningfully with him includes the crucial information that there is, affecting the context in which we live, the influence, effects and pressure of a very real spiritual power which is opposed to God, to his character and to his purposes.

It is the denial or lack of knowledge or awareness of this reality which leads to many people blaming and attributing to God negative experiences which came about by the direct or indirect action of that opposing power.

(It has been said that the Devil’s most useful strategy is not in getting people to believe that God does not exist, but instead to get them to believe that **he** does not exist.)

The influence of that opposing power has invaded or seeped into the whole fabric of life – governmental and social and religious institutions and structures, and the personal lives of everyone without exception. Although the spiritual source and purpose of such a power may be questioned, the reality of the presence of the power of evil in the world is all too evident.

The presence of this opposing power is seen in the personal lives of individuals. The personal struggle is well described by the writer of these words:

“Even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it. I don’t do the good I want to do; instead I do the evil that I do not want to do.” (Romans 7v18,19)

There are of course other individuals who are not motivated to “do good” but whose lives and disposition is that of chosen independence from God, with the lack of moral restraint that such a life exhibits.

There are even those who are deliberately committed to engaging with spiritual power that is in opposition to God.

So the question that arises is,

What has God done to counteract such opposing power and influence in order to enable us to come into meaningful engagement with him?

To cut a long story short, it can be described in this way:
God revealed himself in his dealings with a **people**, and then God revealed himself fully in a **person**.

God chose a people (the Israelites) to show them how to live in right engagement with him. This was not to be just for their benefit to the exclusion of others. Rather it was for that chosen people to be a means of blessing and to show the way to people of the other nations in the world. If the Israelites fulfilled their purpose, others would have a clear demonstration of how to “live in God’s world, God’s way”.

The Israelites also, when they were living in right engagement with God, co-operated in standing against destructive forces represented by other peoples who had aligned themselves with evil spiritual powers which, if left unchecked, would have brought ever increasing violence, abuse and suffering and sorrow throughout the world.

God choosing a particular people is in no way a sign of favouritism but rather a sign of his initiative-taking in enabling firstly them, and then, through them, all peoples to know how to engage meaningfully with him. This shows that rather than God making it difficult, he was showing how existing difficulties or hindrances to engagement with him could be overcome.

It is very important to note that in all God’s revealed dealings, he gave some revelation of himself **first** and **then** sought a response of engagement with him and his purposes. So “blind faith” was never sought as a prerequisite of engaging meaningfully with him. Rather trust for the unknown future was looked for on the basis of what God had done and revealed of himself in the known past in their experience and that of others that they knew.

The incessant introduction that God gives in his dealing with those he is seeking to engage with him is, “I am the God who.....” then stating what he had done in the past which they knew about.

Of course there were reasons why the people did not always respond positively to God’s approach, but they cannot be accounted for in terms of God making it difficult for them to do so. On the contrary, there are numerous occasions where in response to some hesitation on the part of the people he was dealing with, God gave added reassurance, signs and extra encouragement, when we might have expected instead his rebuke to a less than positive response to his clear revelation.

God’s self-revelation to and through a chosen people, in demonstrating how to live in meaningful engagement with him despite the resistant spiritual power, was not complete in itself, but rather a preparation for when God would reveal himself fully in Jesus.

A concise description is given thus: **“In him(Jesus) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”** (Colossians 2v9)

In Jesus, God is saying to us: “Here I am, this is what I am like, here is how I want to engage with you and how I want you to engage with me. Now what is your response?”

Everything that we need to know concerning how to engage meaningfully with God is found in Jesus.

In living and dying as a man completely true to God's character and purposes, Jesus broke through the power of everything that opposes God and hinders people from engaging with him.

The good of that victory has been made freely available to all who will receive it, so that if a person asks,

“What do I have to do to engage meaningfully with God?”

the answer is,

“You don't have to do anything. It has all been done for you. Accept that, and come into that relationship which is offered to you.”

This of course means a willingness to disengage with anything which is incompatible with a right engagement with God.

If the question is then asked,

“What can I do about the opposing power in my past life, my present life, and my future?”

the answer is that it has all been taken care of.

The past is forgiven and God no longer holds it as an offence against him.

The present and the future are taken care of by the spiritual power from God which activates in a person's life when they commit to engagement with Jesus, which enables them to see the opposing power overcome.

The struggles and the possibilities of life in engagement with God are succinctly described in the words of Jesus: “The thief comes only in order to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that you might have life – life in all its fullness” (John 10v10)

“What kind of engagement does God want me to have with him?”

The closest possible loving personal relationship, which is described as a family relationship in which we each relate to God as his child, and he to us as our Father who is fully and always committed to our best interests.

With Jesus being God's full revelation, we might expect that he would have something to say about the difficulties that people face in engaging positively with God. For further exploration of that, a reading of the Gospel according to John could prove fruitful if examined with these questions in mind

Who are the people mentioned in each account?

What is their difficulty in engaging positively with God/Jesus?

What does Jesus say or do in response to that difficulty?

A variety of difficulties, responses and outcomes will be seen to be honestly described.

(This may form the subject matter of a follow-up paper to this one at some stage!)

It is clear that for some, engagement with God has its difficulties, but these are not caused by God.

So to the question,

“If God exists, why does he make it so difficult for us to believe in him?”

the answer is:

God does not make it difficult for us to believe in him, either to acknowledge that he exists or to engage meaningfully with him.

In fact, the problem that most have is in accepting what God has made so easy:

“For God loved the world so dearly that he gave up his only begotten son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3v16)

When asked,

“What can we do in order to do what God wants us to do?” Jesus replied,

“What God wants you to do is to believe in (engage with) the one he sent.”

“To as many as received him (Jesus) and believed in his name, to them he gave authority to become God’s children.” (John 1v12)

Graeme C. Young April 2011