

Can God Make a Rock So Big He Can't Lift It?

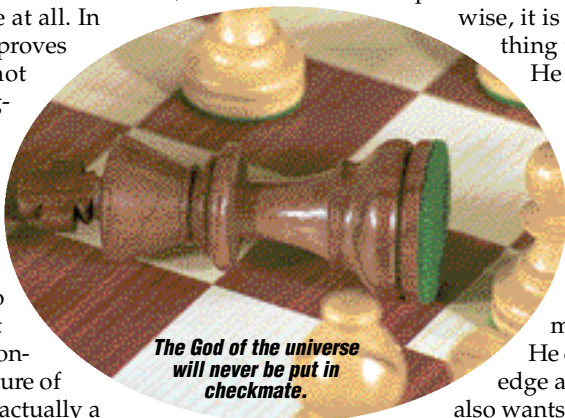
by Alex McFarland

I had just finished speaking at the Spirit West Coast festival and was enjoying the sunny California weather when I noticed a group of teens huddled together, whispering to one another. Curious, I watched while a boy of about 16 sauntered toward me with a smirk on his face. He flashed a quick grin in the direction of his friends, thinking he had caught both me and God in some kind of cosmic checkmate. He asked, "Can God make a rock so big that He can't lift it?"

The challenge inherent in this question is whether there's something God cannot do. I've found that nonbelievers enjoy asking us this question, because either way we respond we submit that there is, in fact, something God cannot accomplish. Either we answer that God can make a big rock He cannot lift or that God cannot make a rock big enough that He can't lift it. A seemingly insolvable conundrum. However, God is not put in checkmate at all. In fact, this problem in no way proves there's something God cannot do. It simply asks a meaningless question that contradicts itself in many ways.

Essentially, the questioner is asking, "Is there any way that the God who can make all things can make a rock so big that the God who can lift all things cannot lift it?" Worded this way, the inconsistency and meaningless nature of the question is revealed. It's actually a pseudo-question. It makes no sense. The question itself has no truth value in order to be evaluated as either true or false. It proposes impossible conditions that can never be met. Trying to answer this question is much like trying to answer "What does the color blue smell like?" or telling someone to think about two boys, each shorter than the other.

The question also reveals false ideas about the biblical concept of omnipotence. Omnipotence does not mean God has the power to do anything at all; it is the power to do anything consistent with His character and who He is. The question is not really one of power as much as it is of logic and consistency.



The God of the universe will never be put in checkmate.

God cannot do something that is logically contradictory or contrary to His nature. For example, He cannot lie or sin or learn anything new. Those things that are true about His character will always be true, and He cannot do anything to contradict them.

Does it mean the Lord is not powerful because there are things He cannot do? Not at all. It simply means He is a perfect and unchangeable God. Just like He cannot do things that contradict His perfect nature, He also cannot do those things that are logically impossible. For example, He cannot make a square circle. Likewise, it is a logical impossibility—and a nonsensical thing to ask—for God to make a rock so big that He can't lift it.



Your teens live in a society obsessed with its own abilities, one that idolizes reason and knowledge as the only right or good thing. Asking the question "Can God make a rock so big He can't lift it?" is yet another attempt by mankind to trap or outsmart God. However, God tells us in Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." We cannot comprehend His ways.

He desires that we continue to grow in our knowledge and understanding of Him (Phil. 1:9), but He also wants us to treat Him with the reverence and awe He deserves, because His mind and abilities are so far above and removed from ours.

I thanked the young man for reminding me that we serve a logical, coherent and all-powerful God. I thanked him for helping me to remember that we will never be able to outsmart the Lord or put Him in checkmate. I am so grateful that nothing we can do and no question we can ask could ever limit the omnipotence and perfect power of our loving Creator.

Author and speaker Alex McFarland is Focus on the Family's director of teen apologetics. He also hosts the radio show "Truth Talk Live."

How do you decide which Christian CDs to include on your Spotlight page?

For starters, we determined long ago that rather than "critique" Christian CDs and pan the ones we weren't crazy about (let's face it, not all faith-based art is good art), we would accentuate the positive and make Spotlight a showcase for strong new releases. To choose the

finalists, we first listen for teen appeal. If the disc passes that sonic test we break down the lyrics. This is crucial. More and more artists seem to be going soft with veiled, poetic references to the Lord. That kind of music has its place, but to make the cut for Spotlight it takes more than just being made by Christians for a project to qualify as a "Christian

album." At least some of the lyrics need to be forthright and establish a clear biblical context for the rest of the disc. At that point we try to choose four options that represent diverse tastes or styles. Then we turn on the spotlight!

