



Week One

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for allowing us to come to you and to this group just as we are. Help our time today to be safe and life-giving. Amen.

Talk It Over

This week we kicked off our new series The Problem of God. During this series are we going to be looking at ideas that may challenge our way of thinking. The invitation laid out in this series is for each of us to follow where the evidence may lead, not where we hope it leads or how we feel it should go.

- As a kid, were you quick to question things or did you generally believe whatever was presented to you? How has this tendency evolved for you as an adult?
- While some people don't find themselves wrestling with big questions of faith, what good might come from a Christian who embraces questions? How might an informed faith, enhance and enrich someone's beliefs?

This week we looked at the question, "Does God exist?". The goal of today was not to prove that God exists, but to consider the trail of evidence we find all over our world — in science, in philosophy, archeology, history, and so on — that point to a creator.

- What are some of the "breadcrumbs" that help you see or believe in God?
- Tell us about a season of your life when you wrestled with the question "does God exist?". If you are in that season now, you can be honest about that.

This week we looked at three of the many fields of study that present rational arguments and point to a place of reasonable faith. Here is a quick overview of those three fields:

1. **Moral Argument:** This is the philosophical argument around humanity's sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice. This argument also considers how nearly every culture and people group throughout history has felt there is a greater being above them or around them.
 2. **Cosmology Arguments:** This is what we know about our universe. In just the past 75 years scientists have discovered the universe indeed had a beginning — it has not always been. In fact, The Big Bang Theory is now accepted in many fields of science. Science has also discovered in the last 50 years that our universe will have an ending. These facts align with the scripture narrative of creation.
 3. **Intelligent Design Arguments:** There is a strange and mysterious complex design to the universe, our planet, and our human bodies. The complexity it takes for our planet to sustain life, the complexity of living organisms, and what we now know at the DNA level make the step toward a God, an intelligent designer, a relatively small leap of faith.
- Of these three arguments, which jumps out to you the most?
 - What are some of the big questions you have about God's existence this season?
 - Have you ever spent time studying any of these fields or arguments? If so, which one(s) and what did you discover?

(Content continued on the next page.)

This week we also looked at the idea that often times people stand an arm's length away from God due to a misunderstanding of what faith is. Here are two common myths about faith:

Myth One: Faith is blind belief and certainty.

Myth Two: Doubt is the opposite or the enemy of faith.

- How have you encountered these myths?
- What dangers do you see coming forth from these myths?
- In what ways are these myths playing out in your life this season?

One problem that can come from these myths is we can start to abandon critical thinking and questions in order to honor our "faith". In turn, it becomes very easy to only listen to people who think like us and we rob ourselves of a richer way of seeing the world.

- How hard or easy is it for you to listen to people who think differently than you? Why is this the case?
- Who in your life thinks differently than you and has made your life richer?
- What are some general practices we can use to help us get better at being willing to hear the ideas, beliefs, and questions of people who don't think like us?

To counter the myths we looked at this week, we looked at this truth about faith and doubt: Faith is confidence to commit to a course of action because of a reasonable level of trust.

- In your own words, how would you define a reasonable level of trust?
- What are some things we commonly place our trust in? How have these specific things earned a reasonable level of trust?

Read Hebrews 11:1

Doubt is not only allowed in our faith journey, doubt is an important step in the faith process. Doubt enables us to ask questions and it encourages us to explore and wonder. Without our doubt, our faith wouldn't be what it is. So while we build our life on faith, we don't need to fear our doubt. Plus, at its core, the Christian faith is not about making sure we believe something. It's about us knowing someone, that person is Jesus Christ. Christianity is intended to be so much more than a set of beliefs.

- How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with these ideas about doubt? Why is that the case?
- How can you personally get better at embracing critical thinking in the midst of still building your life on your faith?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for giving us this space to talk honestly and openly. Help us to encounter a life-giving faith in the midst of whatever questions and doubts we might have. We want to be people who think critically and walk with you. Amen.

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.