

## HOW CAN WE BE SURE GOD ACTUALLY EXISTS?

### BACKGROUND STORY

After Tom left his hometown, his church, and his parents and got settled in his university life, the first issue he had to come to grips with was the question of a Divine Creator. Up until now, the existence of God was something he had simply accepted. After all, how could there *not* be a God? But he could no longer accept this belief simply because others told him to. He was done basing his beliefs on what others said or expected him to accept. He was convinced that it was time for him to take a step back, remove the blinders, and think for himself.

That's when things started getting scary. He began posing questions with abandon. One day, over coffee with a friend, he heard himself articulate an argument that took him to a whole new level of disbelief.

"Look," he said, "if God exists, then he must *not be all powerful*, because he's unable to stop all the evil and suffering in the world. But then again, maybe God is powerful enough to stop it, but is simply unwilling to do so. If that's the case, then he must *not be all loving*. Or worse yet, maybe God is both unloving *and* powerless. In any case, God must at least be either unloving *or* powerless. And if God is either unloving or powerless, then he certainly isn't the God of the Bible. Perhaps it just makes more sense to believe that God doesn't exist at all."

Tom found himself welling up with emotion as he spoke these words. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest. He was actually starting to convince himself of something he thought he would never conclude—not in a million years. He was beginning to doubt the very existence of God....

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the anti-God viewpoints or arguments you've encountered? How have these impacted you? Have you searched for some good responses to them? Were you able to find any?
2. What considerations most convince you of God's existence (perhaps including one you heard in this week's sermon from the Room For Doubt series)? What doubts do you have about them?
3. If someone asked you for advice because he or she was struggling with doubts about God's existence, what would you do? What would you say?

*"Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him"*  
(Hebrews 11:6).

4. Regarding helping others navigate through their spiritual doubts, some say it is best to "start where the *other* person is, not where *you* are." What does this statement mean to you? Do you think this strategy makes sense? Can you think of a time when you've done this?

*"A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."*

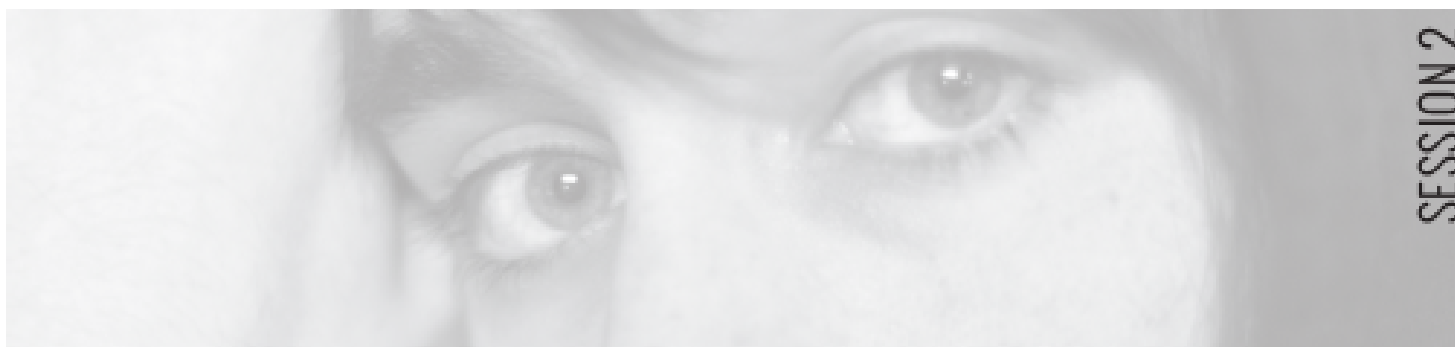
*– Agnostic/Atheist Astronomer Fred Hoyle*

5. If the universe began to exist, then there must be someone or something beyond the universe that caused it to exist. Do you agree with the premise that the universe had a beginning? If so, do you agree with the conclusion that the universe must have a cause beyond itself? Try to think of some reasons for your responses.
6. Most, if not all, scientists would accept that (a) *whatever begins to exist must have a cause and that (b) the universe began to exist*. Do you think it's reasonable to believe that the ultimate cause of the universe *was* God, or at least *could be* God? Explain. Why do you think that some scientists do not believe that the cause of the universe could be God?

*"God used beautiful mathematics in creating the world."*

*– Paul Dirac, physicist and Nobel Prize winner*

7. Psalm 19:1 states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the skies proclaim the work of his hands." What do you think David, the ancient author of this verse, meant by this? Is it still true today? Explain.
8. Try to give one example of how the universe seems "fine-tuned" to allow for the existence of life. In other words, what's an example of a characteristic or constant of nature that must be precisely as it is in order for life to exist? (You might think of some characteristics of the entire universe, our galaxy, our solar system, or our planet that make human life possible on earth. Some of these might have been shared in the message this week. For instance, what about the distance between the earth and the sun or the strength of gravity? For relevant passages, see Romans 1:18-20 and Psalm 139:13-14.)



9. What does it mean to say that something is *objectively* true or *objectively* false? Do you think that humans have a sense of what is *objectively* morally right and what is *objectively* morally wrong? Can you think of examples? If there are such *objective* moral values, how might this point to the existence of a Divine Creator? (For a relevant passage, see Romans 2:14-15.)
10. Share an experience when you sensed God's presence or intervention in your life. To what extent did that experience confirm your faith in God's existence?

*"If you do not believe in a personal God, the question, 'What is the purpose of life?' is unaskable and unanswerable." - J.R.R. Tolkien*

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Pray that your discussion will lead you to be more convinced of God's reality and relevance in your own life and more willing to strengthen the faith of others. Commit yourself to watch for God's presence in your life this week. Jot some down to share later.

*"A reporter once asked Mother Teresa, 'When a baby dies alone on the streets of Calcutta, where is God?' She replied, 'God is there, suffering with that baby. The question really is, where are you?'" (John G. Stackhouse, Can God Be Trusted? [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 67).*