



Session Objective

Where Is God? When we ask that question, we're also asking a lot of other questions. How do we find God? And how do we know when we've found God? Or, does God find us? In this session, we'll explore some of these basic questions about God, see how they've been answered by Christians through the years, and examine how those answers stack up today.

Faith Statement

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave humans inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of God's will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal God's self, and to declare that God's will unto God's Church; and . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary . . .

— *Westminster Confession of Faith* (6.001)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- How do we (you) know that God exists? How would you respond to someone who tells you that God doesn't exist?
- Have you experienced God's presence in your life? If so, when? If not, do you think you will ever experience God?
- Is it OK to have times of doubt and to question God's existence? Why or why not?



Explore

Can We Find God?

Read Psalm 19:1–4a and explore these questions:

- What is the writer of the psalm saying about how we know God exists?
- What do you picture in your mind when you read, "The heavens are telling the glory of God"? What does this picture tell you about God?
- How can there be language without words (v. 3)? What do you think this means?

Does God Find Us?

Read Acts 17:22–31 and discuss these questions:

- If you were one of the Athenians listening to what Paul was saying, how would you react?
- What do Paul's words tell us about how God reveals God's self to humans?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned:

- How would you respond if someone asked you, "Where is God?"
- Is it more important for God to find us or for us to find God?
- What other questions come to mind when you discuss where God is?



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together talking about God's Word.





Session Objective

If God had never been revealed to us—through creation, in Jesus, through Scripture—it would never occur to us to ask, “Who is God?” But God *has* revealed God’s self to us, and so now we turn to the question of who this God is. For Christians, that’s a question we can’t begin to answer until we grasp (as much as humanly possible, at least) the concept of the Trinity.

Faith Statement

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son

—The Nicene Creed (1.1, 1.2, 1.3)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What three words would you use to describe God? Explain why you chose these words.
- With which part of the Trinity (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit) do you most easily connect? Which is the most challenging to connect with?
- How can God be one God in three parts?



Explore

Read Matthew 28:16–20. Explain to the participants that these are the last five verses in Matthew’s Gospel, so they come *after* Jesus’ death and resurrection. Explore the following with the group:

- What do you think of the doubters in verse 17?
- Do you have doubts about your faith, either occasionally or all the time? How do you feel when doubts creep in?
- This passage is not clear as to whether those who doubted were also among those who were worshipping. Is it possible to worship and doubt at the same time? Why or why not?
- In this passage Jesus makes one of the Bible’s few references to the Trinity: God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Does thinking about God as a Trinity help you understand God better, or does it make God more confusing? Please explain your answer.



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they’ve learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the Bible passage.

- How would you respond if someone asked you, “Who is God?”
- How would you respond if someone asked you to explain the Trinity?
- What other questions come to mind when you discuss who God is?



Exit

Invite participants to share any joys or concerns that they have about the days ahead. Close in a prayer that includes the joys and concerns of the group.





Why Did God Allow Sin into the World?



Session Objective

The Bible opens with the majestic account of God's creation of the universe, the earth, and all the earth's creatures, including human beings. It's an inspiring, breathtaking story—but it takes only a little over two chapters for God's good creation to be stained with sin. In this session, we'll explore the biblical understanding of the origins and nature of sin and how that understanding is reflected in one of the church's confessions.

Faith Statement

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation.

—A Brief Statement of Faith (10.3)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- How would you respond if someone asked you, "What is sin?"
- Why did God allow sin into the world?
- If God allowed sin into the world, why isn't it OK for us to sin?
- What are the consequences of sin? Are there different types of consequences depending on the type of sin, or is there a common consequence?



Explore

Read Genesis 3:1-13 and explore the following:

The serpent has often been thought of as a personification of the devil (Satan) . . .

- Do you agree with this idea? What evidence do you find in the biblical text that the serpent is Satan?
- If the serpent is Satan, what does this mean regarding the origin of sin?
- If the serpent is *not* Satan, what does this mean regarding the origin of sin?

Looking at verses 1-7 . . .

- Does the serpent lie to the woman in these verses? (Compare Genesis 2:16-17.)
- If so, does this justify the woman's eating of the fruit? Why or why not?
- What is the actual sin(s) of the woman and man in this passage?

Looking at verses 8-13 . . .

- In what ways can you identify with the actions of the woman and man in these verses?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the Bible passage.

- In your view, does God "allow" sin to enter the world in Genesis 3:1-13? (In other words, is it God's will that the humans commit sins?)
- How would you explain the origin of sin to a friend?
- Why is it important for us to have an understanding about the origin of sin?



Exit

Give each participant an opportunity to share something that he or she learned or realized during this session. Close in prayer.





Does God Know What Will Happen Before It Happens? (And If So, Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?)



Psalm 139; Romans 8:31–39

Session Objective

The questions don't get any easier: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, why doesn't God intervene and prevent natural disasters and disease? Or murders and robberies? Or plane crashes and car wrecks? The problem of evil has been around a long time, and this session won't solve it—but we will try to discover the proper responses of God's people to life in an imperfect world.

Faith Statement

Q. 28. What advantage comes from acknowledging God's creation and providence?

A. We learn that we are to be patient in adversity, grateful in the midst of blessing, and to trust our faithful God and Father for the future, assured that no creature shall separate us from God's love, since all creatures are so completely in God's hand that without God's will they cannot even move.

—The Heidelberg Catechism (4.028)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Is God in complete control of the world? If so, why do bad things happen in the world?
- Does God know what will happen before it happens?
- Does God control our every move, or does God let us make our own decisions even if God doesn't approve?
- In what ways can you often see God at work in the world? In what ways do you not see God at work in the world?



Explore

Read Psalm 139 and explore the following:

Looking at verses 1–18 . . .

- What is the writer's understanding of God?
- What words would you use to describe God as God is pictured in these verses?

Looking at verses 19–22 . . .

- Do these verses "fit" with the rest of the psalm? Why or why not?
- In verse 19, the writer speaks of people who are "wicked" and "bloodthirsty." Does the writer give any indication of where such people come from, or how they got that way?
- In your view, how do "evil" people get that way?

Read Romans 8:31–39 and explore the following:

- What is your answer to Paul's question: If God is for us, who is against us?
- What does this question mean to you?
- What is the relationship between the situations listed in verse 35 and Christ's love?
- Does Christ's love prevent bad things from happening, or does Christ's love serve another role?
- What powers do the things listed in verses 38–39 have over us, and what powers do they not have?
- What promise does Paul make in this passage?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has new perspectives after exploring the biblical passages.

- Using what you've learned from Psalm 139 and Romans 8, how would you respond if someone asked you, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"
- In today's conversations, what have you learned about who God is?
- After today's conversations, is your understanding of God clearer or more confused? Why?



Exit

Invite group members to brainstorm a list of people or situations in the world that seem broken and in need of God's healing. Close in prayer, lifting up the people and situations that have been mentioned and thanking God for being present during times of brokenness.



Does God Cry When We Cry and Laugh When We Laugh?



Session Objective

We know that God is revealed to us in certain ways, and we've learned that Christians, inspired by God's Spirit, have come up with ways of describing God, reflecting on God's actions in the world, and responding to the presence of sin and evil in the world. But all of this is somewhat impersonal. So what is God really like? Obviously, no one has ever seen God, but in this session we'll explore what we can know about a God who is not only omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent but also personal.

Faith Statement

God has created human beings for a personal relation with himself that they may respond to the love of the Creator.

—*Confession of 1967* (9.17), inclusive language version



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- When we hear someone speak about "God's will," how does that person really know what God's will is?
- Does God cry when we cry? Does God laugh when we laugh?
- If God does laugh and cry with us, how does this affect our faith?



Explore

Read Exodus 33:7–23 and explore the following:

- How is Moses' experience of worship like *your* experience of worship and participation in the church? How is it different?
- Have you ever felt so close to God that it was as if you were talking with a friend? (See verse 11.) If so, describe this experience.
- How do you picture God's face?
- In verse 18, Moses asks to see God's "glory," and in verse 19, God promises, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before you." What's the difference between *glory* and *goodness*? Does God grant Moses' request? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Moses was allowed to see God's back but not God's face? In your opinion, in what ways did Moses have, or not have, a "personal" relationship with God?

Read John 14:8–9 and explore the following:

- What is Philip asking Jesus for? If you were in Philip's shoes, what would you ask Jesus for?
- Jesus seems a bit impatient with Philip's lack of understanding. Is Jesus being hard on Philip? Why or why not?
- In what ways did Philip and the other disciples have, or not have, a "personal" relationship with God?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned.

- In what ways do you have, or not have, a personal relationship with God?
- How would you respond if someone who just experienced a devastating loss asked you, "Where is God?"
- What would you say to someone to help them create or strengthen their relationship with God?



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for each person in your group and for their presence in your conversations.





Why Do People Believe (or Not Believe) in God?



Session Objective

If God seeks a personal relationship with each of us, why do some respond in faith while others seem not to believe? In this session, we'll explore the ideas of faith and belief—what they are and are not—and look for ways to carry our faith into the world through our participation in the body of Christ, the church.

Faith Statement

Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers within us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost . . .

—*The Scots Confession* (3.12)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Why do you believe or not believe in God?
- What reasons do people typically list for not believing in God?
- At what times or in what situations do you find it most difficult to believe in God?
- How confident are you in explaining your beliefs to other people?



Explore

Read Hebrews 11:1–7 and explore these questions:

- How would you restate Hebrews 11:1 in your own words?
- In verse 2, we learn about ancestors who received approval. What did these ancestors do to receive approval? (See Genesis 4:4–5, 5:18–24, and 6:11–22.)
- What do the examples of Abel, Enoch, and Noah tell us about faith?
- In your view, are faith and belief the same thing? (See verse 6.) If not, what's the difference?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–3 and explore these questions:

- What does Paul mean in verse 3 when he writes, “No one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says ‘Let Jesus be cursed!’ ”?
- What does Paul mean by: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit”?
- If, as Paul claims, we can't say, “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit speaking through us, what does this suggest about faith—and where faith comes from?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned:

- How would you respond if someone asked you how to define *faith*?
- How would you respond to someone who told you he or she did not believe in God?



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together talking about God's Word.

