The Big Questions Guide

This guide is meant to help you begin to think through some of the bigger questions relating to God, the Bible, Creation, other religions, etc. This definitely isn’t an exhaustive list, and you probably have questions outside of the few listed here, but hopefully this guide will be helpful in answering some of the bigger questions. If you have any additional questions, feel free to ask a JHM leader!

***Does God Exist?***

There are several arguments that can be made for God’s existence, including:

* ***The Moral Argument*** – History and philosophy have demonstrated that within humans there is a natural sense of a moral absolute right and absolute wrong. For example, we could assume that most people would agree that murder is wrong. We aren’t necessarily taught that murder is wrong, but we know that it is. That’s because within all of us is a moral compass that helps us to know what’s right and what’s wrong. If that compass exists, then there must be a standard of right and wrong that the compass can point to. If that standard exists, then there is reason to say that someone with a perfect understand of right and wrong (God) created that standard.
* ***The Design Argument*** – The universe is too finely tuned, too exact in it’s measurements, and too specific in its metrics for it to be here all by chance. The common illustration goes that the universe is so well-designed, that without God, the chances for life to function here is the same as a tornado whipping through a junk yard and producing a Double Decker Airbus – it just wouldn’t happen.
* ***The Creation Argument*** – Something can’t come from nothing. Everything that exists has to have come from somewhere. If you were to trace everything back to the beginning of the universe, you could argue one of two things: that the universe began from nothing (an a-theistic view or one that doesn’t involve God) or that the universe was put into motion by a driving force (the theistic view or one that involves God). Given the fact that the universe is created with evidence of intelligent design, the existence of an absolute moral right and wrong, and many other arguments not listed here, there is strong evidence to conclude that the universe was created by someone (God) and is not the result of chance.

***Is Jesus That God?***

There are a lot of religions out there, all claiming that they hold the truth to who God is. But Christianity is based on the account of a flesh and blood man who lived over 2000 years ago who claimed that all the evidence of the universe not only points to the existence of God, but that He is that God. Here are several reasons why we trust that Jesus is the God of the universe:

* ***Jesus was a real person*** – There are accounts that exist outside of the Bible that document the existence of a man named Jesus who was condemned to die by crucifixion by Pontius Pilate. The most notable of these accounts was written by a first-century historian named Flavius Josephus, as well as several accounts by first and second century Roman historians. This, along with extensive eye-witness accounts of Jesus, indicates that Jesus was a real person in history that lived in first century Palestine.
* ***Jesus claimed to be God*** – Once we’ve established that Jesus was a real person, we have to turn to evidence that shows us that He was not only fully man, but fully God as well. First, Jesus claimed to be God multiple times in the accounts of His life in the New Testament. (John 8:19, 8:58, 10:30; Mark 14:61-62)
* ***Jesus performed miracles to back His claims*** – Throughout His ministry here on earth, Jesus performed numerous miracles, such as giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, giving those who were paralyzed the ability walk again. Miracles are always done in context with God’s will and being in God’s presence. The fact that Jesus was able to perform miracles that confound any kind of natural explanation is one reason why we can accept His claim to be God.
* ***Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophesies*** – The writings of the Old Testament were completed around 450 B.C.E., which is about 550 years before Jesus was born. In the Old Testament, over 300 prophesies were written that foretold the coming of Jesus and what He would do here on earth, and Jesus fulfilled all 300+ of them through His life, death, and resurrection. The mathematical odds of any one person fulfilling over 300 prophesies is astronomically improbable, and yet He did.
* ***Jesus was resurrected from the dead*** – Both Old Testament prophesy and Jesus Himself predicted that He would be crucified, but also that He would be raised from the dead on the third day of being in the tomb. The only person that has power over death is God, which means that the resurrection is the ultimate proof of Jesus being God. Scripture indicates that this is exactly what happened – and that Jesus was seen by 500 people after His resurrection. A common counter argument is that the disciples could have stolen Jesus body and made up the story about His resurrection, but this is unlikely for several reasons. The most compelling defense of the truth of the resurrection claim is the fact that the disciples and the early church suffered extreme persecution, torture, and often death in defense of having seen and believed that the risen Jesus was in fact God. No one would be willing to endure that pain and suffering for a lie.

***Why Does God Allow Evil & Suffering in the World?***

Evil and suffering are not directly from God, but rather the results of human sin. The world is not the way that God created it. From the first sin in the Garden of Eden, all of humanity is vulnerable to the effects of sin in the world. Why does one person suffer and another does not? Why do catastrophes happen to some and not to others? It is because sin is in the world. But there will come a day when the Lord will return and cleanse this world of all sin and all suffering.

**Revelation 21:4 – "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*,"**

***Is Jesus Really the Only Way to Heaven?***

We believe that Jesus is the only way to Heaven because that is what He said. In **John 14:6**, Jesus clearly states, ***"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”*** Now, just because someone claims to be God and the only way to Heaven doesn’t mean we automatically believe them. If a random person off the street claimed to be God, we would probably call them crazy. But the difference between the random person off the street and Jesus is that He had proof to back up His claim.

Nobody else in all of history claimed to be the only way to Heaven and then performed the miraculous deeds to back it up. From calming storms, to healing the sick and lame, to fulfilling over 350 prophesies, to the most significant event of all, raising from the dead, Jesus proved He was God. Since Christ has done all of these things and proved He was God in the flesh, it is logical to believe what He said: That he is the only way to get to Heaven.

Other people and religions will claim that there are multiple “ways” to get to Heaven, or that “all roads lead to the same place,” but the Bible doesn’t support this at all. And so we must believe Jesus at His word, and share this truth with as many people as we can.

***Would A Loving God Really Send People to Hell for Eternity?***

Even though this is a difficult thing to wrap our minds around, the short answer is, yes. Our souls are created to exist forever in one of two places: in heaven with God, or in hell apart from God. We know that to be with God, all we have to do is accept that Jesus is who He says He is and believe that He died on the cross for us. It’s our faith that saves us – nothing more, nothing less. But because God is a loving God, He gives us a choice to love Him back. If He forced us to love Him and controlled us like puppets, our love wouldn’t be genuine, and we wouldn’t truly have free will. But because He loves us, He gives us the choice to be in a relationship with Him, and ultimately, it’s our decision where we want to spend eternity – with Him in heaven, or without Him in hell.

***How Do You Know If You’re Saved?***

You can know that you’re saved if you trust in Jesus and believe the Gospel. Salvation is based upon the work of God, not something that we do. Our sins separate us from God. Because of this, we are in need of a Savior,

and God sent His son Jesus to die for your sins and offer a bridge back to relationship with Him. We can be sure that we are saved when we believe that Jesus took on the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross and rose again! Deciding to trust Jesus with your life takes your broken relationship with God and makes it new again. **Romans 10:9** says ***“If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”***

This doesn’t mean that you’re perfect after you’re saved. We are still broken people in need of God’s grace. However, having a relationship with Jesus changes us, and as we begin to grow in our faith we begin to look more like Jesus in our actions, thoughts, words, etc. The evidence of our faith in Jesus is the way that we live our lives after we start a relationship with Him.

***The Bible: What Is It and How Did We Get It?***

The Bible is God’s word. It’s His love letter to us, and a road map to help us navigate through life. Logistically, the Bible is a collection of 66 works of literature written by multiple authors over the span of approximately 1,500 years. The 66 books work together to tell the story of how God created the world and everything in it, including us, the eventual fall of man and how sin entered the world, and God’s rescue mission to save the world from itself and restore everything broken to make it new through Jesus.

By the time that Jesus was born, the works of the Old Testament had been written and compiled. After Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven, some of His disciples and followers wrote accounts of His life and His actions here on earth (the Gospels), as well as an account of the beginnings of the Church (Acts), letters of encouragement and instruction to the early churches (Romans – Jude), and a prediction of what Jesus is going to do to set the world right and fix all that is broken (Revelation). These make up the works of what we know as the New Testament.

These writings were passed down, read, and studied by the early Christian churches until attempts were made to compile these works into one book. In the 4th century, all of these works were compiled into the New Testament, and eventually into the Bible as we know it today.

***How Do We Know the Bible Is True?***

There are several reasons that we can hold the Bible to be true:

* ***Consistency*** – Even though the Bible is written in 66 separate books over the span of 1,500 years, the story is consistent all throughout, and it never contradicts itself.
* ***Manuscripts*** – While many of the original source documents have been lost, we have manuscripts, which are copies of those original documents from the same time period. We have, for example, over 6,000 copies of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament that agree with each other to 99.5% accuracy. That means that only .5% of these manuscripts have any kind of discrepancies, and of those, the vast majority are nothing more than spelling errors and very minor word alterations. Speaking in a statistical sense, the Bible is one of the most textually pure historical books that we have.
* ***Inspired by God*** – Even though the Bible is composed of books from multiple authors, God inspired all of them, meaning that the words that the original authors are words from God Himself. The texts of the Bible have been preserved in identical form by Him for the last 3,000 years so that we could use these texts in our lives today.

***What About Dinosaurs?***

Dinosaurs definitely existed, but probably not millions of years ago, as most scientist will claim. While many say that dinosaurs existed way before humans entered the scene (as many as 140 million years before), it is entirely possible that the existed at the same time, which would line up with the Bible’s Creation account. The Bible actually mentions certain types of creatures like the *leviathan* and *behemoth*, which many people believe were dinosaurs. There are also cave drawings of what appear to be dinosaurs, which further asserts that dinosaurs and humans coexisted in the same time.

But one thing is for sure: Dinosaurs definitely aren’t still around. So what happened to them? One theory is that dinosaurs died during or soon after the Flood (you know, that big one with Noah and the Ark). It’s possible that, even if they were on the Ark during the Flood, the dinosaurs did not survive in the new, post- Flood world, possibly due to higher competition for food that was in lower abundance, other catastrophes, hunting by man, destruction of habitats, etc. They may have simply died out like many other species have over the years, though it probably happened a lot more recently than many scientists will claim.