

# WHY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE CHRISTIANITY TO BE TRUE

## Discussion Series Introduction —

These discussion guides are purposed for use by church-going youth and adults.

### The Purpose of These Discussions

- Part 1: To help participants consider some reasons why Christians believe Christianity to be true.
- Part 2: To then consider the kinds of questions and stories we could use to discuss these things well within our everyday conversations.

The questions intentionally lead the discussion toward two goals.

**Suggestion:** As an option to go deeper, prior to each discussion encourage participants to read the corresponding (downloadable) booklets.

**Educational / Discipleship Theory:** It is widely recognised that people remember about 10% of what they hear, 40% of what they say, and 60-70% of what they do. Therefore, the primary purpose of these discussions is to help participants articulate things stated in their own words, and then to engage in conversations that communicate the same – through a process of ‘translating’ points they might make into stories and questions using conversation. This process can increase their actual learning and ability to retain the information any times over, as compared to only hearing the same things stated through our video or a leader who seeks to further explain.

### Prior to each Session

It is recommended that the discussion facilitator will:

- (a) Watch the video to become familiar with the subject, and read the (downloadable) booklet if time allows.
- (b) Take time to carefully review the questions to identify the most valuable learning points. Some questions might then be given very little time for discussion in order to allow time for deeper discussion on other questions.

### Other Notes

- The discussion guides include tips and comments for the discussion facilitator.
- Longer comments are in the end notes, while shorter comments are in small font under the relevant question.
- In all discussions, freely adapt the questions to suit your own group.

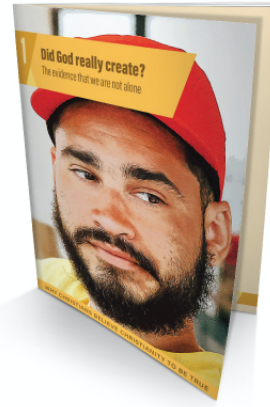
**Discussion #1:** This is the most challenging discussion because will establish patterns to be followed through the rest of the series. This is particularly true for Part 2 – in which participants will discuss the possible points, and then stories and questions they could use to provide a response to an objection.

**Discussion #5:** Due to the scope of this discussion, we have suggested modifications if time does not allow the group to work through the entire discussion.

# 1

## Did God really create?

The evidence that we are not alone



### Discussion Guide #1

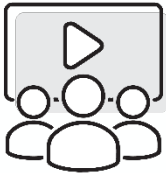
#### OPENING DISCUSSION

**Purpose:** For participants to connect and share their prior knowledge of the wider topic.

1. What is the most amazing thing you have ever created?
2. What is to you the most amazing thing humans have ever created?
3. How do we generally tell the difference between things that are created, compared to things that exist by accident?
4. To set the scene for today's discussion, what objections have you encountered to the existence of God? (Make a short list to come back to later)



#### PRAYER



#### WATCH VIDEO #1

#### TO SET THE SCENE FOR THE REST OF THIS SERIES

1. Why is it important to know why we believe what we believe?
2. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. What are some of the 'big ideas' within these two verses?

*(Note to facilitator: You could explain points rather than discuss them to preserve time)*

- What is the core instruction?
  - *(Always be prepared to give an answer about this to others)*
- What do we need to know in order to obey that core instruction?
  - *(We need to know the reason for the hope we have)*
- What should our manner be when discussing these things with others?
  - *(To do so with gentleness, respect for others and in a spirit of complete personal honesty and truthfulness)*
- What does engaging in this way achieve?
  - *(While this could be worded in various ways, it is honouring to both God and to others)*

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## DISCUSSION PART 1 – WHY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

**Purpose:** For participants to recognise some of the rational reason that contribute toward why so many believe in a God.

1. Regarding today's topics and video, what are some evidence(s) that point toward the existence of an intelligent creator of the universe and life?

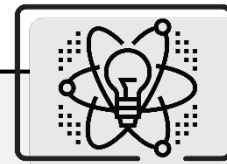
Make a list, discuss each point and consider referencing these in the booklets.

2. What does the 'Inference to the best explanation' mean, and why is it such an important idea?

*(Optional: See Booklet #1, Pg 32-33 for further explanation)*

## DISCUSSION PART 2 – ENGAGING THE CONVERSATION

**Purpose:** For participants to recognise that stories and questions are effective tools for communication.



### Learning Point #1 *(1min to read out)*

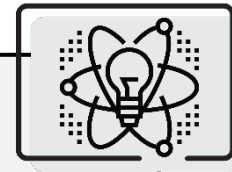
Jesus communicated many things through stories and questions. There is a big difference between knowing what we WANT to say and knowing HOW to say it. Our main goal in communication isn't to win arguments but to win people. A big part of that comes down to the WAY we engage in our conversations.

### For Discussion

1. Why might communicating with questions and stories often be more effective than through direct statements?
2. Why is storytelling an effective communication method?
  - What are some of the features of good storytelling, compared to bad storytelling?
  - When do we see Jesus using a storytelling approach, and how often?  
*(Most of Jesus' recorded teachings were given through the use of stories and illustrations).*
3. Is it possible to communicate points by asking questions? Can anyone think of an example?

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### Learning point #2:

**The power of creativity and a story** *(90 seconds to read out)*

Evidence relating to our faith can be shared with others not only through statements, but also as short stories and questions.

Regarding storytelling, here are six types of stories to consider for your conversations.

1. Stories from our own life experience
2. Stories from other people's life experience
3. Stories from history
4. Stories from the natural world
5. Stories from reason, logic and science
6. Stories from the Bible

Everyone one of these types of stories has a place.

It is also important to understand that different people will be impacted by different types of stories. For some, a personal story from your experience will mean more than one that involves facts and reason. For other, talking about the wonder of nature will impact them and create a connection. While for others, a story from history, that gives value to our cultural heritage, might appeal. Each creates an opportunity to communicate a value or idea.

If our goal is to have an authentic connection with a person, to intrigue or encourage them to consider reasons for faith, a keyword to consider for our conversations is therefore the word CREATIVITY!

We need to bring creativity to our conversations! Practising the art of short storytelling, and of leading conversations through questions, is a great way to do that!

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### An Exercise

(Discussion leader: Further explanation of this activity is in the Endnotes)

1. Choose one or two objections to the existence of God
2. Consider **WHAT** you could communicate and **HOW** you might best say it.

These three questions might help.

- What are some **possible points** to make in your response to this objection?
- What **stories or illustrations** could you briefly insert into your conversation (ideally with humour) to communicate in an interesting yet gentle way?
- What **questions** could you ask that might help to make these points, or to open discussion around them?



### TO TAKE HOME

What is the main thing you take away from this discussion today?

### For next week

- Group facilitator – please promote next week’s discussion topic as being meaningful and interesting for them.
- As an option to go deeper, encourage members to read the next downloadable booklet prior to next weeks video and discussion.
- Encourage members to freely note down any questions they have on this topic– as these will potentially be discussed at the start of the discussion next week.



### CLOSE WITH PRAYER

## Endnotes – regarding the conversational exercise

*These notes will hopefully enable a clear view of what is intended in these ‘conversational practice exercises’ – which are at the conclusion of each discussion guide.*

- **Re the 6 types of story listed above** – these deliberately include evidences from both knowledge/reason and also personal life experience. Different approaches will suit different people.
- **At the end of any short story shared – as a habit, ask a question!** This is how conversations come alive!
- **For a resource full of stories** – note that the videos and (downloadable) booklets are full of stories, illustrations and quotes.
- **Regarding quotes** – these can also be passed on like a personal story, e.g. “I remember reading an atheist’s comment about this. He said... and it made me think...”. Then you ask a question.

### As some examples (points – stories – questions)

#### Regarding the complexity of life...

- **Points:** Accidents don’t make things. Design needs a designer. Information needs an intelligent author/cause. Complexity doesn’t come about by mistake – whether in the fine-tuning of the universe or within life itself. You can’t get everything from nothing without a first cause. You don’t just get life from non life by itself. It’s highly complex and needs an intelligent cause.
- **History story:** (Booklet #1, Pg 11). Stanley Miller in his 1953 experiment that created some amino acids thought he’d found evidence life had created itself. He later realised and admitted they had not discovered what was originally thought, because life was now proven to be more complicated than anyone could have earlier imagined.
- **...Related question:** If scientists are telling us that even their most basic working theories for how life might have made itself are falling over, what’s the logical conclusion?
- **Nature story:** The story of the tail motor on the bacteria inside the cell – which is just like an outboard motor found on a boat (Booklet #1, Pg 12-13); or of the Kinesin (two legged, two armed ‘robot’) walking around inside our cells as in the video.
- **...Related question:** Would you ever suggest that an outboard motor on a speed boat made itself? How’s that any different? To have design and information, you surely need an intelligent designer, right?
- **Complexity / nature story:** (Booklet #1, Pg 14-16). The complexity discovered in DNA (A basic DNA is 1000 letters per page – 1000 pages per book – 1000 pages high – and that’s just the primary currently used information. The so-called ‘junk DNA’ is far longer again – and that’s now been found not to be junk at all!). Consider the story of how amazed scientists have been at what they’ve discovered.
- **...Related question:** What book ever wrote itself?
- **Illustration and related question:** Consider the complexity of coding behind various computer programmes and apps. They don’t write themselves, right? (Intelligent information only ever exists where there is an intelligent cause)
- **...Related question:** Many things in nature are more complex than anything humans with all their intelligence have made. Why assume them to be the result of accidents when we’d never claim that about something simpler like a microwave or aeroplane?
- **Personal story and related question:** I remember putting Lego blocks placed in a bag and shaking them. No matter how we shook, they didn’t make anything – and never would! Do you know of any real-time example where accidents have made complex things?