



These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

THE ENEMY OF FAITH IS NOT DOUBT; IT IS UNEXPRESSED DOUBT. THE CHURCH SHOULD BE A PLACE WHERE ANYONE CAN ASK “BUT WHAT ABOUT...?” AND FACE SOME OF FAITH’S TOUGHEST QUESTIONS WITH HONESTY AND CONVICTION. THAT’S WHAT THIS SERIES WILL DO.

- 1 Everyone has a **“But what about...?”** What is a tough faith question you have or have heard others ask the most?
- 2 **REAL FAITH is a real struggle.** Life is going to challenge faith with some very hard experiences and questions, and authentic doubt does not un-authenticate faith. **Read Matthew 28:17 & Mark 9:24.** What is the place of doubt in the life of faith?
- 3 **“NO GOD” RESULTS... in the loss of meaning and the loss of morals.** Rick said that if we eliminate God in an attempt to eliminate our faith struggle, we also eliminate the basis for meaning in life and morals in society. Did this part of the lesson resonate with you? Why is a belief in a higher authority necessary for a sense of significance and a concept of justice to exist?
- 4 What advice would you give to someone in the midst of a faith crisis? What’s the best thing you could do for them?
- 5 **“KNOW GOD” REQUIRES... the need for honesty.** **Read Jude 22.** Jesus never flinched at a question from a truth-seeker (remember his interaction with “doubting” Thomas). What does the church need to do to show mercy to those who doubt?
- 6 **“KNOW GOD” REQUIRES... the need for humility.** Knowing God better means humbly admitting we will never know God completely. **Read Isaiah 55:9 & Romans 11:33.** Why is the pursuit of complete understanding an inadequate way to deal with our “but what about’s...?”
- 7 **But what about Jesus?** **Read Hebrews 1:3.** Jesus is like God, but it is just as true that God is like Jesus. How does the gospel speak to our doubts? What do we know about God in the person of Jesus that helps when we don’t have all the answers?





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- 1** For some the problem of evil is an intellectual dilemma, but for many it is birthed in a much more experiential place of pain. Which of these has been more true for you?
- 2 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL... doesn’t exist if God doesn’t exist.** If there is no God, shouldn’t injustice be the norm? How does the problem of evil actually argue for the existence of God?
- 3 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL... does exist because freedom exists.** Rick argued that God did not create evil, but He did create the possibility of evil by giving mankind freedom to choose. Agree or disagree? To what degree should God take responsibility for the evil in the world and to what degree should we take responsibility?
- 4 God created only the possibility of evil.** Jesus reminded his first followers that they too would face trouble. **Read John 16:33.** The early Christians expected bad things to happen to good people. Why do people think it would be otherwise?
- 5 God reigns over evil and can bring good out of it. Read Genesis 50:20 & Romans 8:28.** Some find that suffering and injustice actually increased their faith. Can you give any examples of that happening in your own life?
- 6 God experienced evil in the person of Jesus.** Christianity presents the unprecedented notion of a suffering God. God understands. Why must we as Christians never wrestle with “the problem of evil” without first connecting it to the gospel—God entering His creation and experiencing suffering as a human being on the cross to overcome evil?
- 7 God will ultimately judge and eradicate all evil.** God promises to ultimately judge and remove all evil. Why does He wait, and how does knowing what He will do affect our waiting?
- 8 God calls us to face and conquer evil through sacrificial love. Read Romans 12:21.** The Bible doesn’t explain evil as much as it calls us to resist it. What are some practical things we can do today to follow the example of Jesus in overcoming evil with good?





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- 1 What’s our society’s perception of hell? What do you picture when you think of it? What are the ways hell has been referenced or spoken of by yourself or others in your life? How do any of your answers impact your perception of God?
- 2 Look at the following Scriptures: 1 John 4:8; 1 Peter 1:16; 2nd Thessalonians 1:6. The message established, **God is loving, and God is holy & God is also just**. How do you make sense of God’s love, holiness, and justice? How do these different characteristics work together - or are they in contradiction?
- 3 Matthew 5:21-22 & 5:27-30. Jesus’ teaching often confirms that **we take sin way less seriously than Jesus does**. We often talk about the present effects of sin - how it might hurt someone or be emotionally unhealthy for a person. But Jesus focuses not only on present concerns, but also on eternal consequences. What makes it hard for us to talk openly about eternal consequences of sin like Jesus did? How do we ride the line between guilt tripping people with hell and ignoring the topic altogether?
- 4 Read Isaiah 64:6. We live in a world that talks a lot about self-worth, and because of that **we overestimate our spiritual position**. How can we talk about our state as sinners while also affirming that people matter to God?
- 5 Read Luke 16:19-31. Like the rich man in Jesus’ parable, **we minimize our responsibility**. What does the rich man imply by asking someone to warn his brothers so they don’t end up like him? Is there anything else that sticks out to you in this parable?
- 6 **The reality of hell should comfort us and bother us all at once**. Why does hell bother you? Why might hell comfort us? What does it mean to you to live each day with the reality of hell? How does the Gospel free us and compel us in relation to hell?





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1 The Bible, especially the Old Testament, contains stories about some of God’s actions that seem overly extreme. What stories in the Bible strike you this way? What is the problem of assuming that *what is wrong for us is wrong for God*?

2 Read **Deuteronomy 20:16-18**. What was God’s motivation for wanting Israel to drive the Canaanites out of the promised land?

NOTE: One of the big questions Rick asked us to think about is “How do we reconcile texts like these with what other texts claim about the character of God?” In his message he asked us to CONSIDER three key things in relationship to this question: (1) Those battles *may not have been as extreme as they seem*. (2) Those nations *were not deprived of opportunities to escape judgment*. (3) Those stories *are part of God’s bigger story to save the nations*. The next 3 questions reflect on each of these one at a time.

3 CONSIDER: Those battles *may not have been as extreme as they seem*. Read **Joshua 10:40 and 23:12-13**. What point was the writer making with the usage of hyperbole? How does this help you reconcile this part of the story with God’s character?

4 CONSIDER: Those nations *were not deprived of opportunities to escape judgment*. Read **Genesis 15:16 & Joshua 2:8-11**. In what ways did God exercise great patience with the Canaanites, and did He provide opportunity for them to escape judgment?

5 CONSIDER: Those stories *are part of God’s bigger story to save the nations*. Read **Genesis 12:1-3**. How was Israel to be part of God’s plan to bless the nations? How did the “destruction” of the Canaanites fit into that plan?

6 Our unchanging God will judge, and it will be fair. Read **2 Peter 3:3-15**. What can the judgment of the Canaanites teach us about the coming judgment at Christ’s return? How should this impact how we live today?

7 God’s unfailing love took judgment on Himself, and it wasn’t fair. Read **Romans 3:21-26** The scandal of the cross is that God took our judgment on Himself. God was crucified by His enemies in order to redeem them. Every other scandal in the Bible must be seen through the lens of this one. How does the cross provide the ultimate answer for our faith struggles?





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1 How have science and faith been part of your life? Have you experienced any situations in which science and faith were at odds?

2 Two myths still have traction in parts of society:
1) Scientists are anti-faith, and **2)** Christians are anti-science. What do you think has helped perpetuate these myths? How can we help to paint a better picture of the relationship between faith and science?

3 **Read Psalm 8:3-4 & Psalm 19:1.** For many scientists, the study of creation has led them to the Creator. In your experience, what are ways that you see God’s work in creation? Is there a particular part of nature you love - maybe where you easily connect with God or feel close to Him?

4 **Read Genesis 1:1-2.** When it comes to how the universe began, Christians and non-Christians both make faith claims. One scientist said all theories about the start of the universe “*either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance.*” Could this reality help in conversations about faith and science? If so, how?

5 Historically, discussions about evolution and the origins of life on earth have sparked a lot of debate. How can Christians leave room for diverse answers to “*How*” but find unity in “*Why*”?

6 **Read John 1:1-3 & 14.** From an atheist perspective, the universe is impersonal and solely matter-based. What alternative perspective does the gospel of John offer, and how does that change our view of both creation and the Creator?





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1 One obstacle to faith for many people is the sense that heaven is giving them the silent treatment. The Bible is full of stories of men and women of faith who went through seasons of silence with God. Have you ever been through such a season, and what did it feel like?

2 WHEN GOD FEELS DISTANT... God’s *silence* ≠ His *absence*. The worship language of scripture allows room to wrestle with the silence of God. **Read Psalm 13:1 and 88:14.** What, if anything, resonates with you from these Psalms? Why is it important to worship and cry out to God even when you feel like He is far away or absent?

3 WHEN GOD FEELS DISTANT... It might be *because I have moved away from Him*. **Read Ezekiel 14:3.** Sometimes God feels far away because we have moved or put “other gods” in His place. It can happen consciously or unconsciously. Has it ever happened to you? What made you aware of it, and what did you do about it?

4 WHEN GOD FEELS DISTANT... It might be *that what I want is not what I need*. God often feels far away when our prayers seem to go “unanswered,” When it feels like God is not answering your prayers, it might be that God is answering, and the answer is either “no” or “not yet.” Why does that seem to be the case at times? Share a time from your own life where God gave you an answer you didn’t request.

5 WHEN GOD FEELS DISTANT... It might be *because God wants our relationship to grow*. God doesn’t just want us to acknowledge His existence; He wants us to pursue a real relationship with Him that goes beyond having to always “show up” (**see John 4:38**). Why is that hard to do if the relationship is built only on the foundation of signs and feelings?

6 It is possible that God intentionally allows dry seasons in our lives not to break our faith, but to build it. How can a season of spiritual dryness actually prove beneficial to our faith? Share a time in your life when this happened.

7 God’s *presence* > my *feelings*. It seems that God chooses to present Himself to us in a way that makes it easy to reject Him if we choose (*a baby in a manger...a man on the cross*). Why does He do this and how does that give you reassurance even when He feels so far away?

Next Step

What is something you need to do this week as a result of what you’ve learned from this message? How can we help you by our prayers and support?





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- 1** Share some of your story of becoming a follower of Jesus (or your spiritual journey in general if you are not a Christian). Note among the group what similarities and differences are in your spiritual life experiences.
- 2** Split up the following passages among your group to read out loud: **Romans 10:9, Hebrews 9:28, 1 John 5:5, Acts 4:12, and John 14:6**. From early church leaders to Jesus himself, we consistently hear a claim that salvation comes from no one but Jesus. How do you think Christians should strike a balance between confidence in God’s Word and respectful humility in interactions with people who disagree?
- 3** Whether agnostic, atheist, or faith-based - all religious viewpoints make some type of exclusive claim. And most world religions have a stance on Jesus - that he was only a prophet, or that he was a good man, or that he was a wise teacher. **Read John 3:16-18**. How do you think Christians can best take this passage seriously in relationship to alternative views on who Jesus is? How should a Christian message address the ideas of salvation and condemnation?
- 4** **Read Luke 19:10, and 2 Peter 3:9**. These passages frame our understanding of God’s heart for the lost - no matter what country they are from. Why do we struggle to trust God’s fairness and justice in relationship to people from non-Christian societies or remote areas?
- 5** **Read Acts 17:26-27**. In a totally non-Christian society, Paul claims that God is closer to everyone than we think. What do you think Paul means when he says this? Follow up question: Is it possible God is reaching out to people who haven’t heard the gospel in ways we’re not even aware of? If so, does that satisfy our concern?
- 6** **Read Luke 24:46-47, Matthew 28:18-20, and Acts 1:8**. Ultimately, Christians have a God-given role in reaching the world, and our concern is better aimed at the people we can reach with the gospel. What are ways Christians can maintain a focus on the mission Jesus has entrusted to them?





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- 1 Many reject faith not because they find atheism so compelling but because the version of Christianity they witness is so unattractive. In what ways is this critique fair? How is this critique used in ways that is not fair?
- 2 **JESUS IS the #1 critic of fake spirituality. Read Matthew 6:2, 5, 16.** Why is the practice of religion so susceptible to focus on the external? How has this been a struggle for you?
- 3 Nothing Jesus did made more enemies than his critique of hypocritical religion. **Read Matthew 23:13.** How does hypocrisy keep others from entering the kingdom of God?
- 4 **HYPOCRISY IS a struggle for non-Christians as well.** Hypocrisy is not just a Christian problem; it is a human condition (there is some fake in all of us). How have you seen this to be true? How can this truth be used to help those who are far from God?
- 5 Jesus is a critic of fake spirituality but he encourages his followers to “*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven*” (**Matthew 5:16**). How is that different from what we’ve been talking about and what conviction or encouragement do you find from it?
- 6 **AUTHENTICITY IS about direction, not perfection.** Hypocrisy is always a sin, but not all sin is hypocrisy. Christians still sin, but they are serious about being transformed into the image of Jesus. **Read Romans 8:29 & Philippians 1:6.** What do these verses imply about the direction of the authentic Christian life? What is one thing that God is still working on in your life?
- 7 Christianity stands or falls on the person of Jesus, not on the performance of Christians. Ultimately, it comes down to this question: **Is Jesus the real deal?** Why should the shortcomings of his followers not discredit his life and claims? How can you help “*your one*” investigate the life and claims of Jesus?





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1 Living life well demands learning to navigate uncertainty. Followers of Jesus will always have to wrestle with some uncertainty. How have you found this to be true in life and in relationship to following Jesus?

2 THE NATURE OF GOD makes the pursuit of complete understanding impossible. Read Romans 11:33-36. We will never reach a place in our relationship with God where there are no more questions. Why is it important for us realize that having all the answers is not the goal in the first place?

3 GOD HAS A PLACE in His family for those struggling to believe. The enemy of faith is not doubt; it is unexpressed doubt. Jude, who many believe was the brother of Jesus, writes, “*Be merciful to those who doubt*” (Jude 22). What encouragement does this verse bring to you? What can followers of Jesus do to better put it into practice?

4 GOD HAS PROVIDED strong evidence from which one can take a leap of faith. Mankind is hardwired to hunger for something bigger than ourselves to believe in (the very existence of this longing is evidence for the existence of God). God gives ample evidence to help us reach a verdict beyond reasonable doubt (His creation, the wonder of scripture, the witness of His people, the resurrection of Jesus). **Read Acts 17:30-31.** What evidence for God has had the biggest impact on your life?

5 THE BARRIER TO FAITH is often moral more than intellectual. For many people the issue is not evidence; the issue is obedience. In what ways would believing in God’s existence be a major inconvenience for some people? How have you seen this play out around you?

6 THERE ARE THINGS we can do to strengthen our faith. Faith is more than intellectual agreement, faith is a verb. Rick mentioned a few things we can do to strengthen our faith: **Decide** that you want help with your unbelief. **Put** faith-building material in your mind. **Meet** with and **develop** relationships that encourage faith. Most of all, **obey** what faith would ask of you. With those ideas in mind, what’s your **next step** to a stronger faith?

7 WE MUST ALLOW what we know to inform what we may never understand. We must allow the truth of which we are certain to be the lens through which we interpret all the uncertainties of life. This is why the cross is so important. **Read 1 John 3:16.** How has that truth impacted your relationship with God lately?

8 SALVATION DEPENDS more on the object of our faith than its strength. Jesus is greater than our struggle to believe. So keep following Him. **Read 2 Timothy 2:13.** What comfort do you find knowing that He will be faithful even when we are not full of faith?

