



# Why is there so much sin and evil in the world?



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# Why do bad things happen to good people?



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# Where Can I find God?



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# Is God in Control?



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# What is Good like?



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# DOES GOD

# KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN BEFORE IT HAPPENS?



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# HOW DO WE KNOW that God exists?



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# WHERE ARE YOU, GOD?

**Leader:** In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,

**Males:** the earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep,

**Females:** while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

**Leader:** Then God said, "Let there be light" . . .

*(Pause while the candle or lamp is lit.)*

**All:** . . . and there was light.

**Leader:** Where is God?

**Females:** The heavens are telling the glory of God;

**Males:** and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

**Leader:** But where is God?

**Males:** Day to day pours forth speech,

**Females:** and night to night declares knowledge.

**Leader:** But where is God?

**Females:** There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

**Males:** yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

**Leader:** And so where exactly is God? Let us pray:

**All:** God of mystery, we look around this world you've made, and sometimes we see signs of you everywhere: in the stars on a clear night, in the miracle of life, even in those hard places where we do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Other times, we stumble around in darkness, searching for you, but find only our fears, our selfish desires, our failures. Open our eyes and ears, we pray, to the reality that if we want to find you, we must be still and know that you've found us first! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

*(Based on Genesis 1:1–3, Psalm 19:1–4a)*





# CAN WE FIND GOD?

**Directions:** Use this page to help guide your group in exploring Psalm 19. Be prepared to report your findings to the rest of the group.

**Step 1:** Read Psalm 19:1–4a silently. Then have a group member read the passage out loud to the rest of the group.

- What is the writer of the psalm saying about how we know that 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? (verse 3) What do you think this means?

**Step 2:** Think about how nature “works.” The earth orbits the sun, the atmosphere provides the necessary ingredients for life, plants and animals adapt to the changing earth in order to survive, and humans have the intelligence and capacity to thrive by growing food, building shelter, and creating a life-sustaining civilization.

- Do you consider these things proof that there is a God and that this God cares for the world and for us? Why or why not?

**Step 3:** Think about a time when you were faced with a choice to do right or wrong.

- Whether you actually did the right or wrong thing, what did your conscience tell you?
- Some consider conscience to be proof of God’s existence and influence in human life; do you agree? Why or why not?

**Step 4:** Read the following statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith silently. Then have a group member read the statement out loud to the group.

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)

The language seems pretty old-school, doesn’t it? (What do you expect—it’s over three hundred years old!) But we can clear up a few things to make it easier to figure out:

*Providence* = “God’s care for God’s creation”

*Manifest* = “show”

*Sundry* = “various”

*Divers* = “various” or “more than one”

- According to this statement, there are two ways that people come to know God; what are they? Are they equal in value? If not, which is more important?
- How does this statement “fit” with Psalm 19:1–4a?
- How would you put this statement in your own words?





# DOES GOD FIND US?

**Directions:** Use this page to help guide your group in exploring Acts 17. Be prepared to report your findings to the rest of the group.

**Step 1:** Read Acts 17:22–31 silently. Then have a group member read the passage out loud to the rest of the group. This is a speech by the apostle Paul (who can be a bit long-winded!) to a group of pagans in Athens, Greece.

“What . . . you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (v. 23).

This is a key statement: Before, the Athenians were stumbling around, looking for the gods in the world around them; now God, through Paul’s voice, is coming to the Athenians and saying, “Here I am!”

**Step 2:** Imagine that you, like the Athenians, have never heard of the Christian God—you’ve just always had a feeling that there must be something bigger than you out there, some ultimate source of all that is. So, you assign a god to the trees, a god to the animals, a god to the sun, and so on. And then along comes someone like Paul, claiming to tell you the truth about the gods (and God!).

- What would you think?

**Step 3:** In verses 24–29, Paul “backs up” his big claim from verse 23: He summarizes the biblical version of how the world and human society came to be. God created the world and then the first human being, and God planned out the growth of nations and peoples. Then, Paul proclaims that “we are God’s offspring” (v. 29), made in God’s image, and he asks the Athenians what makes them think that God can be found in an idol of gold, silver, or stone.

- What would you think if you were hearing about this one *true* God for the first time?

**Step 4:** In verses 30–31, Paul gets to his main point: It’s time for people to turn around (“repent”) and open their eyes and ears because God has come to earth in human form, as Jesus Christ. But because Jesus was not only human but also God, Jesus represents the perfect revelation of God! We no longer need to “grope for God” (v. 27), because in Jesus, and later in the words of Paul and the other biblical authors, God has revealed God’s self to us.

- Now what do you think? Has Paul convinced you that he has the truth about God? Why or why not?
- What do Paul’s words tell you about how we find God? (Or do we?)

**Step 5:** Read the following statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith silently. Then have a group member read the statement out loud to the group.

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)

The language seems pretty old-school, doesn’t it? (What do you expect—it’s over three hundred years old!) But we can clear up a few things to make it easier to figure out:

*Providence* = “God’s care for God’s creation”

*Manifest* = “show”

*Sundry* = “various”

*Divers* = “various” or “more than one”

- According to this statement, there are two ways that people come to know God; what are they? Are they equal in value? If not, which is more important?
- How would you put this statement in your own words?





# WE KNOW GOD NATURALLY

Directions: Use this page to help your team prepare for a debate on how people discover and come to know God.

## Your team's position:

People can know God simply by looking at themselves and the world around them.

(You personally may not agree, but for the sake of the debate your job is to convince the other team of this proposition.)

### Step 1: Read Psalm 19:1.

- 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?

Remember, your team's task is to argue that we can know God naturally—meaning, from what we observe of ourselves, others, and the world around us!

### Step 2: Consider the following statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith:

"... 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 . . ."

—Westminster Confession of Faith (6.001)

The language probably seems a bit old-school, doesn't it? (What do you expect—it's over three hundred years old!) But we can clear up a few things to make it easier to figure out:

*Providence is God's care for God's creation*  
*Manifest simply means "show"*

- What do you make of the word *inexcusable*? What do we have no excuse for?
- How would you put this faith statement in your own words?

**Step 3:** Think about how nature "works": the earth orbits the sun, the atmosphere provides the necessary ingredients for life, plants and animals adapt to the changing earth in order to survive, and we humans have the intelligence and capacity to survive by growing food, building shelter, and creating a life-sustaining civilization.

- Surely all of these things are proof that there is a God and that this God cares for the world and for us, right?
- How might you argue this point?

**Step 4:** Think about a time when you were faced with a choice to do right or wrong.

- Whether you actually did the right or wrong thing, what did your conscience tell you?
- How might you argue the point that conscience is proof of God's existence and influence in your life?

Note: During the debate, the moderator will ask a series of questions (not necessarily the questions on this page), and each team will have forty-five seconds per question to respond.





# WE KNOW GOD BECAUSE GOD WANTS US TO

*Directions:* Use this page to help your team prepare for a debate on how people discover and come to know God.

## Your team's position:

People can know God only because God has chosen to reveal God's self in the person of Jesus Christ, in the Bible, and in the church.

(You personally may not agree, but for the sake of the debate your job is to convince the other team of this proposition.)

### Step 1: Read Acts 17:22–31.

This is a speech by the apostle Paul (who can be a bit long-winded!) to a group of pagans in Athens, Greece. It's a complicated passage, so use the information in the box to break it down into parts.

- What do Paul's words tell you about how we find God? (Or do we?)
- "What . . . you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (v. 23). This is a key statement: Before, the Athenians were stumbling around, looking for the gods in the world around them; now God, through Paul's voice, is coming to the Athenians and saying, "Here I am!"
- In verses 24–29, Paul summarizes the biblical version of how the world and human society came to be: God created the world and then the first human being, and God planned out the growth of nations and peoples. Then Paul proclaims that "we are God's offspring" (v. 29), made in God's image—so what makes us think that God can be found in an idol of metal or stone?
- In verses 30–31, Paul gets to his main point: It's time for people to turn around ("repent") and open their eyes and ears, because God has come to earth in human form, as Jesus Christ. But because Jesus was not only human but also God, Jesus represents the perfect revelation of God! We no longer need to "grope for God" (v. 27), because in Jesus, and later in the words of Paul and the other biblical authors, God has revealed God's self to us.

### Step 2: Consider the following statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith.

"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 . . . to reveal [God's] self, . . . and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary . . ."

—Westminster Confession of Faith (6.001)

The language probably seems a bit old-school, doesn't it? (What do you expect—it's over three hundred years old!) But we can clear up a few things to make it easier to figure out:

*Providence* is God's care for God's creation

*Manifest* simply means "show"

*Propagating* means "spreading"

- According to this statement, there are two ways that people come to know God; what are they? Are they equal in value? If not, which is more important?
- How would you put this statement in your own words?

*Note:* During the debate, the moderator will ask a series of questions (not necessarily the questions on this page), and each team will have forty-five seconds per question to respond.





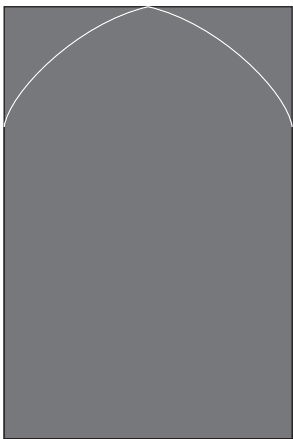
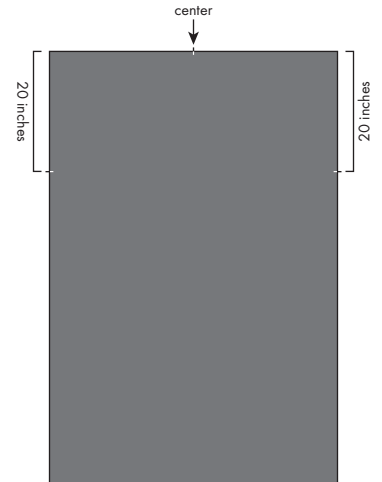
# STAINED-GLASS ART

**Note to leaders:** If you decide to do the stained-glass art project in all six sessions, you may use these instructions to create a stained-glass window frame on which to mount and display the individual panes that your group will make in each session.

**Supplies needed:** one 4' x 6' sheet of black foam core board, yardstick, pencil, newspapers, cutting tool, craft glue for paper, completed stained-glass art projects

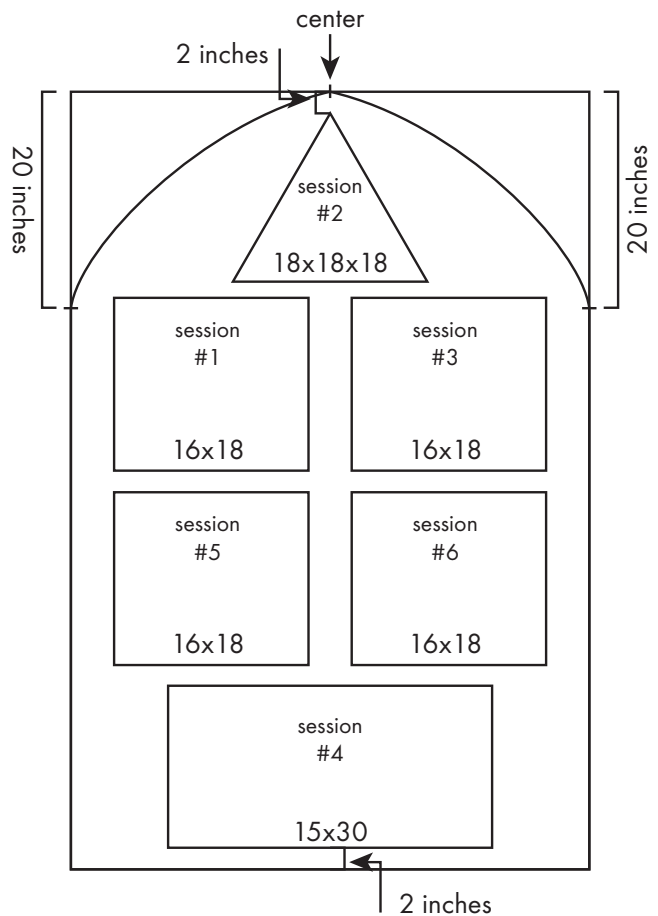
## Creating a Gothic Arch

1. Lay the foam core so the shorter sides (the 4-foot sides) are at the top and bottom. Use the yardstick and pencil to mark the center of the top of the foam core and to mark 20 inches down each side of the foam core.



2. Use the diagram to guide you in connecting each side mark with the mark in the center, creating a Gothic arch shape. Place the foam core on a stack of newspapers to protect the table or floor. Cut on the connecting lines to cut out the arch.

3. Mount the individual stained-glass panes that your group has created in each session on this foam-core board frame with craft glue.



# Lectio Divina Guidelines

**we**Believe  
God's Word for God's People

*Lectio divina* ("divine reading") is an intentional, contemplative way to connect with God's Word. This ancient spiritual practice involves listening to multiple readings of the same Scripture passage interspersed with short periods of silence. If possible, invite different types of voices to be readers (e.g., young and old, male and female).

## Relax in God's Presence

Dim the lights. Light a candle or oil lamp. Play contemplative music. Take a few minutes to relax in God's presence.

## Listen for God's Word

### First Reading

Have a group member slowly read the Scripture passage out loud two times while the rest of the group members listen for a word that "jumps out" to each of them. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her word (without comment or explanation) with the rest of the group. Allow a time of silence before the next reading.

### Second Reading

Invite each group member to think about his or her word during the next reading, exploring the question "How does this word and this Scripture passage connect with my life?" Have a second reader slowly read the Scripture passage out loud to the group and allow for a time of silence after the reading. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her response to the question.

### Third Reading

Invite each group member to think about the question "What is this passage calling me to do?" or "Who is this passage calling me to be?" during the next reading. Have a third reader slowly read the Scripture passage out loud to the group and end with a time of silence. Give each person an opportunity to respond to the question "What have you heard from God in this Scripture passage?"

