

What I'm A Christian | Week 5 Q&R | LX

For the past 4 weeks we've been looking at some of the rationality behind the Christian faith. Talking about reasons to believe in God, trust the resurrection really happened and the Bible... as well as looking at how we handle doubt.

Now, we knew going in that we weren't gonna be able to talk about all the things you might want to hear talked about in a series like this. So, we decided that the final week would be a week of Q&A. Throughout the series, you've had the chance to text-in questions and today we're gonna tackle them.

Basically this is a "choose your own adventure" day. You picked what we're gonna talk about.

Now, let me give you a couple of caveats up front about what our time will look like.

- 1.) Obviously, this isn't going to be like a **normal sermon**. If you're a guest, normally what we like to do here is teach pretty straightforward from the Bible. Today, will be a bit different.
- 2.) There were a ton of questions sent in. Across our family of churches, I'd say we've had at least 100 if not more. The vast majority of them fell into 4 or 5 different **categories**. So, my plan is to address their categories instead of each question specifically... otherwise we'd be here all day.
- 3.) My aim is to get through **as many as possible** while also giving adequate treatment to what's being asked. But, that's easier said than done. So, for that reason, I'm setting myself a **time limit**. I'm gonna try to hit them all, but if I cross my threshold, we'll just have to cut it short - I'm definitely gonna hit 3 of our categories... hopefully more, but we'll just have to see as we go.

So, this first question was the most popular... and so it's going to be the one I devote the most attention to.
Question 1: Genesis or Jurassic Park? Who's lying?

Here are some of the questions you sent in:

- How does the Bible interact with the theory of evolution?
- What is the age of the earth? When did humans come?
- Does Midtown believe in the Long Day theory? How do we explain seeing light from stars that are millions of years old, if the Earth is only thousands of years old?
- Does the Bible infer that the Big Bang didn't happen?
- No but seriously...did dinosaurs exist?

It's good stuff. And I love these questions. Because on the surface the Bible makes some pretty bold claims that the scientific community might not want to co-sign and vice versa. Does being a Christian mean you have to turn scientific study off at the door? Do you have to pick between trusting the Bible and trusting the scientific method? At their heart, they're asking how can, if at all, **Christians (or rather the Christian faith, in general) and science relate?**

Obviously, there is a lot we could talk about here.

In general, this question rises from not really knowing what to do with **Genesis chapter 1**. Let's look there for a moment.

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God

separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And so forth and so on it goes through the 6 days of creation. **And you can see from there jump, there is pattern to it**, refrains and repeated statements: "And God said" ... "Let there be." ... "And it was so." ... "And God saw that it was good" "And there was evening and there was morning, the ____ day."

Immediately what this tells us is we're dealing with something more than just an account of what happened. This is an ancient mesopotamian poem. This is part of what we talked about a few weeks ago - the Bible is a library, not a single book... and it's not a textbook. It's a library full of all kinds different genres within it and reading it rightly means reading according to its genre.

The problem is we aren't exactly sure how we are supposed to interpret this style of writing. It is certainly a poem, of sorts. But what are we to do with it?

- Potentially, we are supposed to **interpret it literally** - like the exact words are exactly what happened.
- Potentially, we are supposed to **interpret it more like modern poetry** - seeing it as more figurative, metaphorical language.
- We always want to use the rest of the Bible to interpret the Bible, but even doing that, can lead you to different conclusions about Genesis 1.

However, one thing that I think it does clear up for us though is that **we do not necessarily have to pit science and the Christian faith against each other.** That's not to say that Genesis 1 isn't necessarily literal, but it is to say that it's not by definition in conflict with scientific inquiry either.

We tend to pit faith or Christianity against science. I'd just like to say that that's a false dichotomy.

Johannes Kepler (German mathematician and astronomer) - described his scientific study as simply "thinking God's thoughts after Him." I find that to be profoundly helpful in this discussion: science, properly understood, is developing an understanding of the world God made as God made it.

I have a friend who had a family disagreement a while ago, where his son asked where the wind came from. And his wife said, "God makes the wind!" But he was sitting there thinking, "Wind is caused by air flowing from high pressure to low pressure. Differences in atmospheric pressure is where wind comes from..." The truth is - they were both right! God makes the wind and he does it by air flowing from high pressure to low pressure. These are not competing ideas though we often treat them that way.

So out the gate, I just want to say that Christians have nothing to fear when it comes to the sciences. Scientific inquiry, study and theory are not the big bad boogymen to the Christian faith.

That's not to say that popular scientific thought or theory is always right. No, not the case. Scientific consensus *can* and *has* changed - even within our lifetime - as new discoveries are made... that's just the nature of the beast. What we think we know for certain today... is one ground-breaking discovery away

from changing tomorrow. But as Christians, who believe we're just "thinking God's thoughts after Him", we're actually uniquely equipped to hold that in tension.

Now that being said... Genesis does posit some **"must-believes"** for Christians - and where the scientific community wants to reject these, we reject it. Here's what they are:

1. **God is the main agent in creation.** Nature is not the deciding power in existence. God is. The central thesis to Genesis 1, whether it's supposed to be literal or not is: "In the beginning, God..."
2. **People are God's special creation.** Humans are different. We are his image bearers on the earth. We have unique and special dignity and worth compared to the rest of creation.

3. God made it all "good" and sin is our problem.

With these 3 things in mind, when it comes to how Christians relate to the origins of life this opens the door for some theories, and shuts it for others. I'll walk you through the big ones.

1. **Naturalistic Evolution** - or what I'll call evolution without God. Or "Evolution as the explanation for everything."

For the Christian, this is the one the door is shut on.

- **While it certainly has strengths** such as observational evidence for common ancestry, fossil records, biogeography and genetics - it outright denies the central claims of Genesis 1 - in this view God is not the main agent in creation... nor are people any different than the rest of creation... nor is anything for that matter sinful *or* truly good.

Now, these are also things it cannot prove scientifically, but positions it holds nonetheless.

We talked about some of the inherent weaknesses of this view in Week 1 of this series:

- Cosmological argument - how we got something from nothing, as well as life from non-life is very much unexplained in this view. "It just happened" is what we're expected to accept.
 - Similarly, there is a problem with basic cell theory - the well established fact that cells come from pre-existing cells... except for this one time... that's actually an appeal to faith.
- Then there is teleological argument - That thinking the origin of life came this way is like thinking an explosion in an ink factory could inadvertently produce the collected works of Shakespeare.

And, of course, the others we mentioned, but don't have the time to recount: the moral argument, argument from desire, human consciousness - and our trust in it - the reliability of math, AND human language - all of these are challenges to a completely naturalistic theory of origin. And to be fair they aren't without some theories to answer them, but they are real significant challenges nonetheless.

And, for Christians, the door is closed here. But does that mean, we have to reject everything? Not necessarily, after this, there is some room to talk. There are a variety of views Christians can and do hold - each with strengths and weakness. I'll walk you through them. Side note: If I don't represent your view as well as you'd like me to - please forgive me as God in Christ has forgiven you.

2. **Evolutionary Creation** (or what some call theistic evolution)

God guided the process of evolution. God is creator and the means by which he created was the process of evolution.

Like when the Psalmist in 139:13 says, “you knit me together in my mother’s womb” he was not saying that he hadn’t developed in the perfectly normal biological ways. It is a figurative way to say that God instituted and guided the biological process of human formation in his mother’s womb.

So similarly, when we are told that God ‘formed Adam from the dust of the ground’ (Gen 2:7), the author might be speaking figuratively in the same way, meaning that God brought man into being through normal biological processes.

Strengths - The observational evidence seemingly pointing to common ancestry. Fossil record. Biogeography. Genetics.

- Also solves each of the weaknesses mentioned above regarding naturalistic evolution. God as the great cause, God as the fine tuner, God as the one who writes his laws on our hearts, and so forth.

Weaknesses - But, there are some questions here that are difficult to square with particular parts of the Bible. For example:

- When did Adam and Eve appear? There are parts of the Bible that seem to treat Adam and Eve like historical people. If God guided the process of evolution then at what point did Adam and Eve come about and in what sense were they the first humans?
- In what sense are Adam and Eve “in God’s image” when other hominids have come and gone before them? Is homo sapien the only one truly in God’s image?
- What does it mean that sin brought death? Is that simply spiritual? The process of evolution necessitates death. Now, to be fair, no matter what, we know that we have animals eating plants before sin enters in Genesis 3, so death on some level - at least to plant life - was in fact happening already... but the question still holds.

But, that’s an option.

3. **Old Earth Creationism**

God created the world as spelled out in a literal account of Genesis 1 and 2 and it is currently 4.5 billion years old. Couple of ways that this gets explained.

- Potentially a long space of time between God’s initial creation of the earth in vs 1 and then the 6 days of particular creation in the rest of the chapter. Sometimes called the “gap theory.” Kind of like “In the begin God created the heavens and the earth...” and then a long, long pause until v.3
- Others who hold this argue that In Genesis 1 the Hebrew term for “days” is “aeons.” One way of rendering that word is “day” but it’s also “epochs” or “ages.”
 - So it’s plausible that the seven “days” actually represent seven stages of creation. In other words, the days of Genesis 1 are extremely long “ages” of time. Which could overlap with a process of God-guided evolution potentially.

Strengths - Agrees with the current scientific estimate for an Earth 4.5 Billion years old is correct, it explains how the Bible is consistent with this aging.

Weaknesses:

- With the Gap theory - fossils, like dinosaurs, predating humans.
- With the day-age theory - photosynthesis is a challenge.

I don’t know if you noticed as we read earlier in Gen 1, Day 3 is where vegetation is created. The Sun is Day 4. If those are long periods of time and not literal days, it would mean that there was an entire era of history where plants did not live by the process of photosynthesis. Now, all things are possible with God, but we know that’s not how plants normally work. So it’s a challenge.

4. **Young Earth Creationism** - Most literal view of Gen.1 Literal seven days creation period. Earth is only thousands of years old. Though may have “the appearance” of age.

Strengths - The adulthood of Adam and Eve is solid evidence for this position. The original creation was created with an “appearance of age”. God creates Adam and Eve as adults, he doesn’t make them as babies. He creates mature trees and other plants and animals. If you showed up the day after Adam and Eve were created they would have been adults but if you asked them how old they were, they would say 2 days old. The trees were created with an appearance of age. The rocks were created with an appearance of age.

- Flood in Genesis 7 plays a big role here. It would have had profound effects on fossil records and our dating system.
- Additionally, this view also holds that humans and dinos lived at the same time...and I consider that a strength because I think that’s awesome!

However, the Weaknesses are evident. A lot of the observational data we have seems to contradict it. There’s the usual suspects: common ancestry, fossil records, biogeography and genetic data - but more specifically...

- **Star light.** For example, the Andromeda Galaxy is 2.5 million light years away. Therefore, the light from it that we see right now is 2.5 million years old. If creation is only thousands of years old, then how are we seeing light that old?
- This requires an explanation for the appearance that dinosaurs existed long before people. Did God create the earth with fossils already placed? That seems strange. Potentially the flood in Genesis 7 accounts for this.
- And there are even biblical difficulties. For example, if we are strictly literal about Genesis 1 text, how are there nights and days before the sun? Nights and days are Day 1, sun is Day 4.

So there you go. → If you want to deep dive - book called → *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design, edited by J.B. Stump*

That’s probably more info than you wanted. The last thing I’ll say, though is that this is really an in-house debate. A proper view of creation is doesn’t save you. Jesus saves you. If you’re a not a Christian, this is not where you need to start - this isn’t even the craziest thing Christians would claim to believe! Start with the Resurrection. Start with Jesus. And then you can work out the rest.

And if you’re already a believer, you gotta know this is ultimately an open-handed issue. We can all have opinions about it and **I’d encourage you as you read the Bible, to develop a biblically-faithful position** because the Bible tells us we need to be prepared to give a defense when someone asks about our faith. And that’s a biggie.

So be informed. Weigh it out. Come to a conclusion. But have an open hand about it... and we can sort out the details as brothers and sisters over a pint.

So, moving on... we had a bunch of questions come in that went something like this:

- What about people who have never had the chance to hear about Jesus - like if they live in a remote part of the world - what happens to them?
- What happens to infants who die?
- What about people with disabilities or severe mental handicaps who don’t have the mental faculties to trust in Jesus - what does God do with them?

Question 2: What happens to people who don’t hear about Jesus?

The general flow of thought with this question goes something like this. It looks at passages like Romans 10 which says: - For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? . . . So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ([Rom. 10:13–15, 17](#))

The chain of logic in Paul’s mind seems pretty straightforward:

1. The only way to be saved is to call on Christ’s name.
2. The only way to call on Christ’s name is to believe the gospel.
3. The only way to believe the gospel is to hear the gospel.
4. The only way to hear the gospel is to be told the gospel.

So, the person is asking, “If this is true, what about people who, for one reason or another, never have the opportunity to hear it? Perhaps, due how and when and where they were born or died? Is this fair?”

Personally, I think this is a really, really good question... and really difficult one - not just because of the intellectual and theological issues it raises, but because of the emotion behind it. These are questions rooted in love and care for the disadvantaged and a desire for fairness and understanding.

So, I think it’s wisest to respond to this in a couple of different ways. So let’s start here:

1.) Why do people go to hell - or why do people receive God’s judgment - in the first place?

Romans 1:18–23 [18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (ESV)

No one receives God’s judgment because they haven’t had the chance to hear about Jesus. And that’s important. Humans receive God’s judgment because they reject God. They choose to define right and wrong for themselves - or in the language of the Bible they choose to do what is right in their own eyes. They choose to treat things that aren’t God as though they were God - whether that be idols crafted to resemble created things like animals or other humans like in non-Western portions of the world - or just how we do it by devoting our lives to the little gods of money, or success, or comfort or kids. This is what the Bible would call sin.

And the Bible is clear - we’ve got enough evidence to know God is God by what’s around us. You can go back and check out week 1 of this series where we made that case. So, no one is without excuse.

And at this point, I think it’s important for us to recognize some assumptions that lie at the base at how this question is sometimes asked - especially when it’s posed about a tribesmen in a far off land. There is a latent assumption built into it that perhaps someone might be inherently good and have a god-ward

disposition but simply be ignorant... and the question becomes, “Well, obviously this tribesman means well - he just didn’t know! Will God hold him accountable for his ignorance?”

The problem is **that assumption violates the reality** of the human condition and fails to see sin as God sees sin. It posits that humanity is basically good... that sin is more akin to little foolish mistakes than an affront to a holy King. It’s a very white, Western way of thinking about humanity... that humans are merely the victims of their own context and would make the right decisions if they had access to the right education.

But, the Bible and really all of human history tell us that is fantasy. Like **Romans 3** (quoting the Psalms says) **There is no one who does good. There is none who seeks after God.**” Would God condemn an innocent tribesman? Absolutely not... there simply are no innocent tribesmen.

Now there are some who will argue that if the tribesman knows he is unrighteous and trusts in God’s mercy over his own righteousness for salvation - even though he has no specific knowledge of Jesus - like the tax collector in Luke 18 or certain individuals from the Old Testament - then God will save them based on their faith via the limited revelation they’ve been given.

There’s an argument to be made there... but the Bible presents a lot of problems with that view. The least of which is not **Romans 10** which we read earlier and the account of **Cornelius in Acts 10** - who was as devout as a guy who didn’t specifically know Jesus could be... and yet to save him the Spirit had to come to him in a dream and tell him to be on the lookout for someone to come tell him about Jesus... specific knowledge of Jesus seems integral.

But, obviously that begs the question:

2.) What about babies and the mentally-handicapped

And it gets a bit trickier because unlike the tribesman, this category of person can’t consciously suppress the truth about anything - they don’t possess that ability... so what does God do in these circumstances.

Now, Christian opinion varies depending on who you talk to - and the truth is - we don’t entirely know because the Bible doesn’t explicitly talk about this like it does those who choose sin consciously... but I’ll give you what I think the Scriptures most clearly teach and where I personally land...

I think we can most likely infer from the Scriptures that God imparts the saving grace of Jesus to children who die young and the mentally-handicapped apart from their ability to have conscious faith. Here’s why:

We have ample evidence in the Scriptures that the Spirit can and does touch children in the womb - we have examples of this like David and John the Baptist and even Jesus himself. And that Jesus even teaches that the kingdom belongs to children ([Mark 10:14](#)). Which was actually a pretty radical thing to say in this society that valued children far less than we do now.

And I know this opens up a whole other can of worms that we won’t go into, but there is evidence that children from believing households are conceptually in a different “position” than those outside the fold. According to Ephesians 6:1, they have access to covenant promises and, in 1 Corinthians 7:14, that they are made holy by a believing parent.

And then there is 2 Samuel 12:23 - when David’s son dies he says “I will go to him”. This certainly could mean “I too will die.” But in the next verse we read, “Then, David comforted his wife” ([2 Sam. 12:24](#)). I

think it more likely that v. 23 was a comfort to David and Bathsheba because David knew he would see his child again in the next life. The juxtaposition of comfort makes less sense if David is simply assured he will join his son in the ground some day.

Lastly, the clear pattern of Scripture - over and over and over again - is that people are judged on the basis of sins committed voluntarily and consciously in the body (see 2 Cor. 5:10; [1 Cor. 6:9-10](#); [Rev. 20:11-12](#)). In other words, the pattern is that judgment is always based on conscious rejection of divine revelation (whether in creation, conscience, or Christ) and willful disobedience. There is no explicit account in Bible of judgment based on any other grounds. And simply, infants and the mentally-disabled are not capable of either, so neither are they condemned.

I think this is most reasonably what the Scriptures teach here. But, underneath all of this, we're actually asking something else...

3.) Behind this question, we're really asking: **"Is God just? Can I actually trust that God will do the right thing?"**

And the answer to that is, "Yes." Even if we can't for certain know what happens to those who can't hear the gospel, we can trust that God will do what is right.

The cross is all the proof we need to discern this. Again, Romans tells us in **Romans 3:26** - that the work of Jesus on the cross was to show God's righteousness (or you could say his goodness and his trustworthiness to do the right thing) by being the **"just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

Through Christ, **God upholds his justice by giving sin what it deserves** - condemnation - but **also his goodness and compassion - by extending grace** to those who should be condemned.

The cross tells us that ultimately there is **no one more just** and simultaneously **no one more compassionate** than God.

No one who more stands up for what is right, and no one who more understands and cares about the plight of every single human more than God.

And it tells that He is more than a God who *knows* these things... but is a God who has *acted* on them.

So even if we don't theoretically know for certain what may happen to those in question - we can trust Him. We can trust the wisdom of an unfathomably good and merciful God.

And you may think that sounds like a cop-out, but it's not. It's the posture of humility. After all, it is not our place to subject the Creator to our finite and fallen notions of fairness - in fact, it could be argued that grace itself is not fair. But, our task is to take Him at His word and trust His heart. As **Isaiah 55:8-9** says, **"His ways are higher and different than ours."** Or **Psalms 119:68**, **"He needs no counselor, for he is good and does good."** because we know the cross is the summit of his wisdom and the intersection of His justice and love.

(CHECK TIME) Question 3: Does the Bible condone slavery?

So this one came up predominantly because we see slavery - in one form or another throughout the Bible and since we sit on the otherside of arguably the most atrocious slave trade in human history, this makes

us very uncomfortable. Like is God okay with it? Does he accept it or allow it or even as some try to twist the Bible and make it say - does He even endorse it?

Three thoughts kind of swirling around in my head on this one. Hopefully as I give these three individual thoughts it'll all make sense as an answer to this question.

Thought 1: The bible, over and over and over and over again, condemns oppression.

If you want to see it, Ant - the pastor of our Two Notch church - has a whole document he'd love to share with you that has like 60 passages about how much God hates oppression and how we as His people should respond to it. Let me give you three.

Exodus 22:21-24 21 "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. 23 If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, 24 and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 24:14 "You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns.

Proverbs 14:31 Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

The Bible and God Himself clearly and overwhelmingly condemns the act of those in power using their power in cruel ways against those who have less power than them. So let's just set the record straight on that, right now.

Thought 2: Slavery in the modern world (400+ years) is very different from slavery in the time of the Bible.

What you have to realize is that slavery in the Bible (and much of the ancient world) was very different than slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries in some pretty key ways:

1. Terms of slavery

Slavery in the Bible:

- Economic agreement - persons often went into slavery to pay back a debt or to be taken care of
- Often it was not perpetual - didn't transcend generations.

Modern World:

- Forced by capture and sale
- The whole industry of the West African slave trade was built off of stealing people against their will and treating them as if they aren't people made in the image of God. Which the Bible condemns explicitly in **Exodus 21:16 - "Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death."**

2. Treatment of slaves

Slavery in the Bible:

- Whole system of laws in place for much of antiquity (though it does go bad later on in the Roman empire) to protect slaves from harsh treatment

- Clear example - slaves often were given an education.
- It wasn't essentially oppressive at its core.

Modern World:

- No rights, protections, freedoms

3. Racial and Ethnic Component

Slavery in the Bible:

- Usually wasn't racialized
- Someone was not made a slave or justified as a slave because of certain ethnic features or traits or characteristics

Modern World:

- A whole system built off of ethnic differences and prejudice

SO DIFFERENT...in fact, the closest example of slavery we have in the Bible that looked more like our modern day slavery was actually when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt in Exodus.

While they initially sold themselves to Egypt due to financial need... their situation eventually turned oppressive due to ethnic prejudice... and what does God do? He steps in and says → Nope, this is not gonna happen. This is wrong. And frees them from captivity.

Thought 3: Be careful with what you say God condones because of narrative accounts.

And this is a bigger idea that applies to more than just slavery. But, it goes back to the idea of genre.

You have to distinguish in narratives between what God explicitly commands - do and do not's - and how he relates to His people and how His people relate to Him.

There are things in Scripture, particularly in narrative accounts - where God allows people to do a certain thing or act a certain way, even though it was not how he intentionally designed things to work. And many of those instances included in Scripture are to show - "hey, this is bad and it doesn't work."

And so you can't make the argument from silence. You can't simply say - "well God doesn't step in and say - no more slaves! Or no more multiple wives! Ya perv! This is bad!" We can't make an argument from silence. That's bad hermeneutics. Bad Scripture study.

Instead, you can see what He does say: And in this case, he explicitly condemns oppression like we've seen. Slavery in the modern world is an entire system built on oppression. In God's book, it's a no-deal. That's easy.

We see throughout the Scriptures, God's heart is that men would be free: At the end of **Philemon**, Paul tells Philemon to welcome Onesimus, his runaway slave back not as a slave but as a brother in Christ. In **Leviticus** and **Deuteronomy**, God establishes a whole system that includes regular periods of time when slaves would be set free from their commitments and their debts. In **Galatians 3**, we are reminded that in Christ, there is neither slave nor free → All are set free by the blood of Jesus.

So what you have to do with good study of Scripture is to say - "Ok, in the narrative accounts it seems like God doesn't outright condemn or punish this, but it also seems like 99% of the time it goes really poorly. Maybe this is to show a bad example of why this is against God's design. And then in the rest of Scripture, in the NT teachings, in the laws He establishes, etc. → you see God's heart clearly shown.

I hope that helps.

Question 4: What are good ways to start the dialogue about these issues with our friends?

Be a friend. Ask questions. Ask follow-up questions. Seek to understand them and where they are coming from. For some reason, I've noticed that many Christians, find the idea that asking questions is being too nosy. And I think that comes from a fear of being "that guy" or "that girl" that is pushy with their faith.

2 things I'd say to that:

- 1.) If Jesus is alive... then fear of being "pushy with Him" is really more about our own fear of man - or I'll say it more bluntly - is really more about our own worship of other's opinions. If Jesus is who he said he is, and has done what the Scriptures say He's done... I'd hate for someone around me to come to judgement before Christ and have to look me in the eye and ask, "Why didn't you try to tell me?!"
- 2.) The only way you become "that guy" or "that girl" is if you're not asking questions to listen, but to challenge. No one likes to be put on the spot, but most people like to discuss real things in environments where they feel like the other person is coming to them as an equal.

I know a guy who does this really well. He reads a lot and listens to sermons fairly regularly and starts convos about it. He'll hang out with a co-worker over lunch and say something to the effect of, "I was at church on Sunday and my pastor said _____. That kinda messed with me. What do you think?" And he'll let the other person talk and ask about why they think what they think... and then they just dialogue. And he doesn't worry about what he doesn't know... if he comes across something he doesn't know what to do with he just says, "Man, that's a really good thought. I'm gonna need to look into that." And then he does. And then he shares what he finds with the person he was having the convo with.

It's really that easy. Ask questions and don't act like a know-it-all.

But that being said: **two other things**, I'd encourage us with.

1 Peter 3:14-16 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Best thing you can do is know why you believe what you do. Think about it and research for yourself and know your conclusions

- Convos aren't likely to be scheduled. "2pm lets chat about the cosmological argument". No. More organic. Be ready.

A big reason why we wanted to do this series was basically to say - Hey, you're not crazy for believing this stuff. You don't have to just concede the intellectual high ground to your skeptical friends or family.

There is reasonable defense for what you believe. You can stand on faith and knowledge and reason. We wanted to bolster your faith. Stand strong. In love, with a good conscience, with good deeds, a kind heart - asking lots of questions....AND stand strong.

John 6:44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

→ You can't will people to Jesus. You're called to point people to Him. That's it. God draws them in. And this is just a reality we have to deal with. Some of you know this well because you've got friends that you've already talked about these things with until you're blue in the face... and still nothing.

People coming to faith in Christ takes the spirit of Christ drawing them in and flipping the switch. No amount of arguing and reasoning is ultimately going to make a person trust and follow Jesus of Nazareth. At best what we are doing is putting kindling around their hearts that we're praying the Holy Spirit lights up.

And with that **Let me end with this: If you're still wrestling with all of this stuff - you're welcome here.** And what we're actually praying for is that the Spirit would do this for you.

Because at the end of the day: **It's about Jesus.** He really is who he said he is and has really done what the Scriptures say he's done - He's our great savior and we firmly believe he can be that for you, as well.

Pray