Wrestling with Doubt *Finding .Faith* by Adam Hamilton.

**Session-1 “**IS THERE A GOD?” **Participant Copy**

**Goals**

Through conversation, activities, and reflection, participants will:

• Identify reasons they believe in God,

• identify questions and doubts related to their faith in God, and

• consider the relationship between faith and science.

**Biblical Foundation**

• Psalm 19:1-2

* *Doubt is not only natural, it is healthy, provided it spurs us to further reflection and a search for what is true*. (p.3)
* *One of the premises of this book is that doubt and questioning are not the enemy of faith, but often a path to a deeper and more authentic faith. (p. 4)*

Attention

Reflect on the question stated in the chapter title, "Is There a God?"

Prior to class record your responses to the following two questions. Record responses in the space provided below. In This activity the group is simply making a list. Note that there are no right or wrong answers. We will review lists in class.

1. What are your reasons for answering "Yes, there is a God"?
2. What doubts or questions do you have, or have you had, about the existence of God?

**Opening Prayer**

*Video Study and Discussion*

1. Did anything specific stand out as you watched the video?

2. What is one thing you learned that you did not know before?

You are Invited to keep the video in mind as well as the book Bible passages throughout the rest of our discussion.

**Bible Study and Discussion: Psalm 19:1-2**

* Hamilton's observes that *"throughout most of human history, the order, beauty,* and sheer existence of this world led humans to faith in a Creator" (p. 10).

Together ( out loud)read Psalm 19: 1-2 as printed in *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*, chapter 1 (p. 10).

***The heavens declare the glory of God;***

***the skies proclaim the work of his hands.***

***Day after day they pour forth speech;***

***night after night they display knowledge*. (NIV)**

1. How does creation lead you to faith in God the Creator?
2. What do you learn about God the Creator from observing creation?

* Hamilton's plan for this book, is to consider a variety of questions and struggles that may lead us to doubt. The focus of chapter 1 is the relationship between faith and science.

Hamilton admires Dr. Hawking, a well-known scientist as being brilliant. In Hawking’s last book, published just months after he died, Brief Answers to the Big Questions (Bantam Books, 2018). “It's a great read and offers his thinking about a variety of life's questions. Chapter 1 asks the same question we're exploring in this chapter: "Is There a God?" In it Hawking writes,

*If you accept, as I do, chat the laws of nature are fixed, then it doesn't take long to ask: what role is there for God? This is a big part of the contradiction between science and religion, and although my views have made headlines, it is an ancient conflict. One could define God as the embodiment of the laws of nature. However, this is not what most people would think of as God. They mean a human­ like being, with whom one can have a personal relationship. When you look at the vast size of the universe, and how insignificant and accidental human life is in it, that seems most implausible.*

Note Hamilton's observation that the Creation stories in the book of Genesis are "one source of some of the conflict between science and religion" (p.12).

**Before Class, you were asked to read the two Creation stories in the Bible Genesis 1: 1-2:4a and Genesis 2:46-3:24.**

1. What are the similarities between the two Creation stories?
2. What are the differences between the two Creation stories?
3. *What are these stories not intended to be ?*

8. What is the purpose of these stories?

9. What do we learn about God from these two Creation stories?

**The stories are not attempting to explain the how of creation, but the why and who of creation. When Christians seek to read Genesis 1-2 as science and history, the result is a false conflict between science and faith.** (p. 14) ·

**Read Genesis 2:7**.

**Read Psalm 8:3-9**

10. What scientific evidence do people cite to support the viewpoint that God is unnecessary?

11. What scientific evidence do people cite to support the viewpoint that God is necessary?

**Some key points for discussion**

Hawking and others interpret the vastness of the universe as evidence against the Christian belief in a personal God who intimately knows all of humankind.

•In contrast there are many scientists who made significant discoveries and contributed to the body of scientific knowledge of the universe while remaining faithful Christians.

Scientists who held a strong faith in God include Copernicus, Galileo, Johannes Kepler, Robert Boyle, Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Blaise Pascal, and Sir Isaac Newton.

If you would like to learn more about some of the scientists who were also people of faith, see chart below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scientist** | **Scientific interest** | **Thoughts about God** | **Conflict** |
| Galileo, | Italian astronomer, physicist,  He did not invent telescope but used it to discover celestial phenomena such as the moons of Jupiter, the phases of Venus, and the imperfections on the Moon’s surface. | Galileo’s approach aligns with the biblical notion that it is the “glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of scientists to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2).  He believed that God had endowed humans with reasoning, senses, and understanding to explore and discover within the natural world. | Galileo’s support for the heliocentric model (which placed the Sun at the center of the solar system) contradicted the geocentric view(which placed the earth at the center of the universe) endorsed by the Catholic Church.  He was tried for heresy. |
| Francis Bacon, | Lawyer, statesman, philosopher, writer, statesman  Famous for formulation of scientific method | He believed that religious faith and scientific inquiry were complementary.  He considered religious assumptions necessary for the coherence of science, asserting that without God, the method couldn’t establish reliable foundations for knowledge | In 1621, Bacon was evicted from public office for taking a bribe; four years later he died after catching a cold while stuffing a chicken with snow in an early experiment in refrigeration., |
| **Scientist** | **Scientific interest** | **Thoughts about God** | Conflict |
| Johannes Kepler | astronomer and mathematician. Discovered the three laws of planetary movement | He saw his scientific work as a fulfillment of his Christian duty to understand the works of God.  He believed that humans, made in the image of God were capable of understanding the Universe that God had created. | His mother practiced witchcraft and he had to fight to keep her out of prison, it injured his career. |
| Sir Issac Newton | English mathematician, physicist, and astronomer, famous for laws of motion and gravitation. | He saw God as the masterful creator whose existence could not be denied in the face of the grandeur of all creation, believed the motion of the planets made it impossible not to believe in God: He believed that God intervene and tinkles with the universe to keep it in working order. | Engaged in bitter feuds with colleagues about scientific discoveries.  He rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, which caused controversy. |

Hamilton summarizes in this paragraph from Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith:

*I love the apostle Paul's words, quoting the ancient Cretan poet, Epimenedes, when he said of God, ''In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28 NIV). There is nowhere that God is not. God sustains all that is. God's presence permeates all creation. Yet God also transcends the universe, being both within the universe and beyond it. God is not the universe and the universe is not God. But God's glory and presence saturate the universe.* ***(p. 21)***

12. What experiences or relationships played a key role in your becoming a Christian and professing faith in God?

**Closing Prayer**