

6th & 7th Grade Edge Homestudy

Lesson #2: ART SHOW

Can We Know That God Exists?

GOAL

The goal of this lesson is for the youth to understand that science and faith can work together and are not opposed to one another.

TEACHING

Can We Even Know If God Exists?

Children tend to ask a lot of questions about everything. While we may not vocalize our questions as much as we get older, there are a lot of things in the world to learn about. Some questions we ask have simple and clear answers that we can find by Googling them, while the answers to other questions are more complex and take more time to figure out. Some questions remain mysterious, and we may never be able to answer or understand them completely.

One of the biggest questions we could ever ask that affects every part of our lives is, “Does God exist?”

This question does not have a simple answer, but it is worth exploring because if the answer to this question is “yes,” our entire lives change. When we know that God is real, we find purpose and meaning for our lives. With God, we are given an identity that helps us know who we are, why we are here, and where we are going.

Faith and Science

When asking big questions, many people turn to science as the one method or tool for discovering the answer. Science consists of a variety of methods of studying and observing the structure and behavior of different elements in the physical and natural world.

While tools like the scientific method can aid us in knowing about many different things, at a certain point we begin asking questions that are not able to be measured or weighed, or do not fit into any formula for a hypothesis. For example, does someone love me? How much does my friend like me? How happy am I?

If science measures the physical world but there are realities like emotions and love that cannot be measured by science, then science is only one tool we can use to answer our questions. Once we move past the physical world, we must turn to tools like philosophy and logic, which work together to answer life's questions by using concrete and reasonable conclusions that lead us to new knowledge. (*Fides et Ratio*, 3-4)

When asking big questions, like ones about the existence of God, the answer can only be found by using every tool of discovery we have — science, philosophy, logic — and then, ultimately, faith. The word faith is used when we talk about what we believe and teachings about God that has been handed down to us, but, in another sense, faith is an intentional act to believe and trust in God and what has been revealed about Him. (CCC Glossary)

The teachings of our Catholic faith confirm and deepen what we discover about God based on the reasonable facts, knowledge, and conclusions we have made. Then, after using the tools of science, philosophy, and logic that are available to us, we make a choice, through an act of faith, to trust and believe in what we have learned.

Read Romans 1:19-20

It is possible to know if God exists: “The existence of God the creator can be known with certainty through His works, by the light of human reason” (CCC 286). It is good to search for God and ask questions, but it is

important to understand that faith and belief are not opposed to reason and science; rather, they work together.

Intellect, Heart, and Will

Just as faith and reason work together, as human beings we are uniquely created with three faculties — intellect, desire, and will — that also work together to help us answer our questions. Intellect is the ability to think about something or to know something. We often spend the most time forming our intellect using the tools that we just discussed — through science, logic, philosophy, etc.

The tools of knowledge — our intellect — play a big part in our search for answers to our questions, but we also have two other faculties: our desires and will. (CCC 30) Desire is the ability to feel emotions and to want and need things. This plays a huge role in our daily lives and it is important that we learn to respond appropriately to our desires — to act rightly upon our emotions and learn the difference between things we want and things we need. It is our desires, or longings, that lead us to wonder and ask questions. We seek answers because we desire to know things like, “Who am I?” “What is the point of my life?” “Where am I going?” “Can I even know if God exists?”

Our will gives us the ability to choose — we are not robots. Through our will we take action and “do.” It is important that we form our intellect and desires well because that will inform what we choose to do. We have been given so many tools to seek and find God. Through the use of our tools and ability, we can come to conclusions about whether or not He exists, what He is like, and what this means for our lives.

No matter where you are in your belief about the existence of God, it is important that you ask questions and discover the truth using both science and faith, desires and will. In doing so, you will take ownership of what you believe and be able to defend it.

Prayer

Does God Exist?

Take some time to reflect and answer the question, "Does God exist?" with one of the following:

I know that God exists

I am open but not sure if God Exists

It is hard for me to believe that God Exists

Then, read the prayer the corresponds with your answer. Finally, read the Statement of Openness.

I KNOW THAT GOD EXISTS

God, I know you exist. I believe in you because ... *spend some time talking to God about the reasons you believe He is real.* Thank you for the way you love me through ... *list the people in your life who show you God's love.* Please help me love everyone here the same way these people have loved me. Please help me learn more so my belief in you will stay strong, and help me experience the way you love me so my relationship with you will grow. Amen.

I AM OPEN BUT NOT SURE IF GOD EXISTS

God, I am not sure if you exist. These are the reasons I am not sure you exist ... *spend some time talking to God about the reasons you are unsure about whether or not He is real.* These are the reasons I think you do exist ... *spend some time talking to God about the reasons you think He does exist.* I see people around me who believe you are real and people who do not *spend some time talking to God about who these people are and what you admire about them.* God, if you are real, help me learn about you. Help me experience the way you love me. Help me believe. Amen.

IT IS HARD FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS

It is hard for me to believe that God exists. Why? What are the reasons I struggle to believe? Have I expected God to be there for me but I have felt that He was not? Do I not think that faith is important? Has someone I admire told me that God is not real?

What about the people I do admire who believe in God? Is there someone in my life who believes in God who I can talk to about my doubt? What do I admire about this person? What questions do I have for him or her?

Do I have any worries about the way my life will change if I believe God is real? What are they? How can I remain open-minded about the possibility that God exists?

STATEMENT OF OPENNESS

I will enter each lesson ready to hear the Catholic Church's teachings about who I am and who God is. I may find it hard to believe that God exists, but I will learn and ask questions so I can understand why other people do.

Lectio Divina

Read Acts 17:26-28

What word or verse jumped out at you?

What is God saying to you through this scripture?

What is God asking you to do?

Read Romans 1:19-20

What word or verse jumped out at you?

What is God saying to you through this scripture?

What is God asking you to do?

