

**WEEK 2**  
**LESSON GUIDE**

**BEYOND  
BELIEF**

**BIG IDEA**

When you doubt, it's okay to ask questions.

**BIBLE**

Exodus 6:28–7:7; 12:24–28; James 1:5.

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

**ACTIVITY** | The Pyramid

- We are continuing in our series "Beyond Belief," through which we discover together what it looks like to have questions and doubts. Sometimes having questions without answers is okay, but other times, we want our questions answered — especially if there is a prize!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need [candy](#) as a prize and a pyramid drawn on a [poster board](#) divided into six sections [like this](#). To play, ask for four volunteers, who will be paired into two teams. Each team will have one minute to work through six categories of questions written on the board (covered under a piece of paper). One team member will describe items within the category without saying it, while the other will attempt to guess the category. For example, for "things that get lost," they could say, "coins, remotes, AirPods, etc." After they have guessed a category, reveal the next category. The team who guesses the most categories wins. If both teams guess all six categories, do a speed round, and the first team to guess the answer wins. Here are some suggested categories to get you going: things in a desert, things that slither, things you might find in Egypt, hot places, things you need to survive, symptoms of dehydration, things you take while desert camping, the Ten Commandments, and desert movies.*

**STORY** | Tell about a time when God didn't make sense. (Part 1)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share a story about a time you had doubts because you couldn't understand who God was or what God was doing. Share how you felt during this time and one of the questions or doubts you wrestled with most. Don't feel obligated to give a simple solution for your experience.*
- Sometimes it's hard to find nice, neat answers to our questions. They may not exist, or we may not be ready to hear the answers. Questions are okay. Questions mean that we are curious, and curiosity means that we care. So let's look at a story from a confusing part of Moses' life and be open to see what questions we have.

**DISCUSSION**

- What is one thing you find hard to believe you still don't have an answer for?
- On a scale of 1–5, how easy is it for you to ask a question when you don't feel like you understand something very well?
- \*Who do you know that is unafraid to ask questions when they don't understand something? What do they do?

## SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

**SCRIPTURE** | Exodus 6:28–7:7

- Last week we saw that Moses had doubts and questions but God still remained committed to him. Moses' circumstances of being a fugitive for committing murder and having insecurities about his abilities made him wonder if God still wanted him. How could God use a criminal (who doubted his own ability to persuade people going) to convince the most powerful leader in the world that he should release the people of Israel from slavery? When Moses doubted God's plan, he brought his questions to God, and God responded.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Exodus 6:28–7:7.
- Moses asked God, "Why would Pharaoh listen to someone like me?" and God told Moses it was "because I am with you and will show you what to say and do." In one sense, that's pretty cool. God was still going with Moses. But that answer didn't give Moses many details to work with. I think I might still feel a little uncertain if I were Moses, especially after God told Moses that no matter what he said, Pharaoh wouldn't listen to him. God promised to work despite all of this.
- So, God answered Moses' questions, but the answers opened up more questions. For example, if Pharaoh didn't listen to Moses, how would he let God's people go free? Scripture lets us see these moments of people's lives in a way that allows us to resonate with them and know that it's okay to see a big problem and have questions about whether God's plan will succeed. Scripture makes space for these types of questions. They are expected and welcomed.

**OBJECT LESSON** | An Overview Of The Plagues

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this object lesson, you'll need [red sticker dots](#), [plastic frogs](#), [mini-chocolate chips](#), [a fly swatter](#), [toy animals](#), [Band-Aids](#), a bag of ice, wilted lettuce, a [flashlight](#), and a [candle](#). Before your program, place all of the materials in a box and get a volunteer leader or a student to help you demonstrate the next section by having them re-enact each plague as you teach.
- The next section of Scripture starts to answer some of Moses' questions, but it's a lot to get through. So instead of going through all of it, here is an overview:
  - First, God commanded Moses to strike his staff on the Nile River – the primary water source for the Egyptians – and the whole thing turned to red blood. We'll use some of these red sticker dots to show that.
  - Then came the (plastic) frogs. Seven days later, frogs took over the land, terrorizing the people and leaving quite a mess.
  - After that came the gnats, which are represented by the mini chocolate chips. These tiny pests were everywhere, yet Pharaoh still wouldn't relent.
  - Then came the flies, which we'll represent with this flyswatter. You'd think Pharaoh would give in at this point, but he stood his ground.
  - Next came the plague on the livestock. All the Egyptians' livestock died, which devastated the city, but Pharaoh still wouldn't let God's people go.
  - Then, the boils – wounds all over the body that we'll represent with these Band-Aids. But Pharaoh still refused to free the Israelites.
  - After this, God sent hail. Giant balls of ice crashed down from the sky. We'll use ice cubes to model how hard ice falls. But even still, Pharaoh refused to do what God asked.
  - Then, the locusts. More bugs infested the city and ate up all the crops, which are represented by the old, wilted lettuce. But Pharaoh still wouldn't let the people go.

- Next, the city was plunged into darkness. We'll use the flashlight for that. The Egyptians were without light for three days, while the Israelites had plenty of light. Though the world's light had left this region, Pharaoh continued to refuse Moses.
- Pharaoh continued to refuse Moses until the tenth, final, and most horrifying plague — the death of every firstborn child in Egypt. We'll use the blowing out of this candle to represent the mourning experienced throughout the city.
- So why did God do all of this? Well, that's an ongoing conversation, and even brilliant people can't agree on how we're supposed to understand all the story's details.
- This story is important because it permits me not to need all the answers all the time. While I pursue God and seek solutions to my complex questions, I can know that:
  - This story (and stories like it) in Scripture might raise some big questions, and that's okay. For example, what do we make of all the regular people who had their lives upended by the plagues?
  - The people in this story, like the Israelites, Moses, and the people of Egypt, probably had a lot of questions, too. Even people who follow Jesus and spend their whole lives studying the Bible still have questions about these stories. And that is okay.

### SCRIPTURE | Exodus 12

- Toward the end of the section on the plagues comes one of the most critical moments in the Bible, and while it doesn't answer all our questions, it does normalize having them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Summarize Exodus 12 or read Exodus 12:24–28.*
- This moment is called the Passover, and it will become a massive celebration for the Israelites, during which they remember God successfully rescuing them from Egypt.
- The Passover marked the beginning of a journey that put Egypt behind the Israelites and God's promises ahead of them. Passover initiated a new season in which God's people celebrated how God powerfully protected them and invited them to remember all the amazing things God had done for them.
- This raises an interesting spot of tension, built into the story. God's people were oppressed and looking to God for guidance. They had questions about what God was doing, yet God still rescued them. Additionally, there were hard times filled with questions but also moments of celebration.
  - For generations, this passage and the observation of Passover has and will continue to help God's people remember and celebrate God's faithfulness in times of doubt and questioning. The Exodus story challenges us to see God's love and mercy amid God's judgment of Egypt.
  - The story's point is that no matter how big and bad the situation you face is, God is at work to make things right.
- And I have to admit, it's difficult not to get caught up in the destruction the plagues caused Egypt. Couldn't God have done it differently, without the destruction? All of these doubts and questions can be tough to stomach. And if you are asking these questions, that's okay. God is inviting you to ask them.

### DISCUSSION

- **\*When did you have a question or doubt that drove you to ask a question? Do you feel like it was received well? Did you get the answer you wanted?**
- **What stood out to you about the questions that Moses asked God?**
- **\*What questions do you have about the plagues God brought to Egypt?**

### SCRIPTURE | James 1:5

- If we find questions challenging to stomach, that doesn't mean we shouldn't ask them. Our doubts and questions open our curiosity and motivate us to seek wisdom to discover the answers or to rest in God's sovereignty when we can't find them.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read James 1:5.
- James, brother of Jesus, wrote that if we want wisdom, we have to ask God for it. James emphasized asking questions in our faith, especially if we want answers. Questions help us learn. We don't need to feel guilty for having them.
- When we learn to admit our questions openly, we begin to see that we are not the only ones with questions — everyone deals with them. And when we learn to ask and hold space for other people's questions, we become paths to strengthening each other's faith.
- If there was anyone who we might feel had a handle on their questions of faith, I imagine it would have been Jesus' brother James. But we know he had them, too, because he encouraged us to ask questions without fault. So when you have questions, ask! **When you doubt, it's okay to ask questions.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

**STORY** | Tell about a time when God didn't make sense. (Part 2)

- What we are seeing is that it is okay to doubt and ask questions. When we doubt, it simply means that we have had experiences or thoughts that make us uncertain about the things we have been taught or always assumed are true. Questions are inevitable and a normal part of following Jesus.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story about a time you had doubts because God didn't make sense. Provide some resolution to the point when you began to doubt. Share how your questions led you to grow in your faith. What did you do? How do you still live with such tension? Give students a sense of how you can have a vibrant faith and still have questions.
- Asking questions strengthened my faith, so don't be scared to ask yours. Know that people have been asking challenging questions about God and Christianity since the beginning of time. It's just part of your faith!
- When you find yourself in moments of doubt, ask yourself these four questions:
  - **HOW ARE MY DOUBTS INVITING ME TO BE CURIOUS?** It's fair to admit that reading the Bible can be challenging. But even in that challenge, God invites you to wonder, stay curious, and ask questions. The book of Isaiah even says that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. The important thing is not to feel guilty for having questions and not letting doubt turn into isolation.
  - **HOW ARE MY QUESTIONS INVITING ME TO GROW?** It's important to understand that having questions indicates we are growing. The faith we learned from our family or church is becoming more personal, and as that happens, our questions are an important part of the process. That's good! It means your faith is important to you. You're learning to compare new information with that which you've always held.
  - **WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT MY QUESTIONS?** Questions and doubts can be unsettling if they are left unsaid. We begin to think we are alone in our questions, and often these questions only grow until they paralyze our faith. You don't have to walk through this experience by yourself. Moses had people like Aaron, his sister Miriam, and his wife Zipporah, to discuss his doubts. Who can you invite into this process with you?
  - **WHAT DOUBTS DO I WANT TO TALK TO GOD ABOUT?** Questions lead us on new paths to discovering ways to connect with God. As we learned last week, we saw through God's interactions with Moses that questions and doubts don't make God angry or pull away from us. Rather, they are an invitation. God wants to talk with you about the hard and important stuff. Spending time with God in similar ways is part of how our relationship with God becomes our own.

**DISCUSSION**

- What do you think about the idea of asking God your questions? What do you think it means for God to give you wisdom? What would it look like to ask for wisdom when you have doubts?
- \*In what ways do you think your questions are inviting you to grow? What would it look like to talk to God about those questions this week?

**REFLECTION** | Being Okay With Our Questions

- Learning to live with these questions can be a tool to strengthen our faith. It will be fun, challenging, messy, deep, painful, and honest. Learning to acknowledge and push into our questions leads us to a version of the resolution we are hoping for. It's a sign that we care to grow and take our faith seriously. So let's take some time to practice this.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need something to write with and to print the [handout](#) included in this week's materials. Guide students through the activity on the card.*

**RESPONSE** | I've Got a Question. Send It.

- We understand that having questions and doubts can feel lonely, so we want to allow you to share your questions and doubts with people who get them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need blank [cards with envelopes](#) and writing materials. Place these note cards inside an unsealed envelope, given to each student. Have each student write their name and grade on the front of the envelope. Place a few mailboxes, buckets, or slotted boxes at the front of the room. Allow students to write questions on their note cards, place them in the envelopes, and "ship them" by placing them in the receptacles at the front of the room. For each question, write a graceful response encouraging students to keep asking and give them a simple, kind answer to their question. Either mail it to them later or give it back to them the next time you see them.*
  - **ALTERNATE OPTIONS:** *Use a texting service like [Remind](#) or a presentation service like [Mentimeter](#) to field questions. Create a channel for questions on your youth group's Facebook or Discord, or use Instagram's Q&A feature.*
  - *If appropriate, consider scheduling a time to talk to them about how they choose to take responsibility for their doubts and questions while remaining faithful to God.*
- God isn't scared of our questions, so neither should we be. It's okay to wonder. Ask away! **When you doubt, it's okay to ask questions.**