

PAGE TWO – THE TWO CLAIMS

Note: If you are starting with a new session, remind the group of the agreement to honor one another's opinions and to keep shared ideas in the group. Check in with group members to relate any conversations that they might have observed or experienced with others regarding the claims of how powers and forces work in the world.

For additional leader preparation, consider reviewing an interview entitled, "If God Exists, Why Can't Science Prove It," with Rev. George L. Murphy who is both a pastor and theoretical physicist and quoted in this lesson. You may access this interview at:

<http://www.theevidence.org/article/78/programs/archives/the-evidence/episodes/all-programs/episode-123>

To begin, review the information on PAGE TWO under the heading: THE SCIENTIFIC CLAIM. Ask the group to recall and discuss any scientific discoveries that have been important to the understanding of how powers and forces work in the world. Take time to briefly research any noted works by scientists such as Albert Einstein, etc.

Click on the link to watch the video with Michio Kaku and Bill Nye.

Discuss the video and encourage students to recall how the scientific method is used to develop theories and laws for how the universe works.

Ask: What is the difference between understanding **how** something works and understanding its **purpose** in life? *Allow all answers. Help students think about the difference between the function of forces and powers in the world and an intended meaning or purpose for how these forces and powers affect living things. For example: Gravity is a force that pulls us to the earth, but it is not for the purpose of making our life better or worse, it is simply a force that pulls us to the earth.*

Next: Review the information under the heading: THE CHRISTIAN CLAIM. Discuss each definition using the following questions to encourage conversation:

Deism: Did God create the world, and then let things run on its own, or is God still working today? Why or why not?

Omnipotent: What is your image of how God works? Is God always the main cause of every event and controlling every small detail of our life?

neo-Thomist: Does this view change your understanding of our ability to make choices, without divine intervention, in life?

Kenotic: Does this view change your understanding of how powers and forces work in the world?

Help students think about their view or “picture” of how God might work in the world and ask them to consider which of the four understandings may or may not make the most sense for each of them. Reinforce the understanding that the differences between these and other viewpoints of God’s power are between people who believe in God and not with scientists. Promote respectful listening as each group member offers his or her personal view.

Next: Ask the group to think about the similarities and differences between the

scientific and religious claims of how powers and forces work in the world. Discuss the reasons for why others might disagree about these two ways of viewing these issues.

Read the following quote by Rev. George L. Murphy: “Finally, it is faith, our trust in the God revealed in Christ, that enables us to “see” God at work in the world. Our belief that God supplies our daily bread is something different from our knowledge of the processes that enable grain to grow, farmers to harvest it, and the economic system to put the bread in the store.” Discuss this statement and the role of faith in seeing God’s active presence in the world.

Ask: How can we know if it is God or just natural powers at work when events, especially natural disasters, occur? *Allow all answers. Encourage the group to understand how each person’s viewpoint might reflect each of the four different understandings discussed above.*

To close this portion of the lesson, ask the group if they can tell one way that they might talk to others about how powers and forces work in the world. Encourage members to make a list of “I Believe” statements that include both understandings.

If the session will end, encourage students to ask family and friends about their understanding of scientific and religious views of natural processes and to bring those ideas back to future sessions.