

GROW

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ACTIVITY SHEET



Believing in a caring God has been shown to help fast-track recovery from mental and emotional challenges. However, when faced with critical incidents or tragic circumstances, many people see God in a different light. The most obvious questions people have for God are; “why would you let this happen to me?” or “what kind of a God would allow this to take place?”. Both the type and nature of these questions reflect not only what you think about God, but also, perhaps what you believe God might think about you.



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you:

- (a) reflect on what you believe and the impact it may have on mental and emotional well being
- (b) learn to differentiate perception from reality
- (c) learn to trust again

What do you Believe?

Critical incidents have a way of making people reflect on what they believe. Whether or not people believe in a Divine Creator, when facing tragic circumstances, they'll often have questions for or about a God. Do you? If yes, the type and nature of your questions may lend greater insight into your belief system or alternatively lead you to call into question pre-existing beliefs.

"I don't know why this happened to me, but if my heart is breaking, God's heart must be breaking also"

Indicates possible belief in a Divine Creator who cares.

"I don't get why this happened. Why me? Why now?"

Indicates possible confusion about whether God even exists.

"What kind of God would allow this to happen?"

Indicates possible belief in an uncaring or uninterested God.



REFLECTION TIME:

People arrive at their beliefs in different ways and for different reasons. Identify some of the contributing factors that have led you to believe in what you do ✓



Family	Scripture	Experiences	Role Models
Evidence	Education	Past Hurts	Investigation
Culture	Intuition	Encounter	Upbringing

WHEN NEW EVIDENCE CONFLICTS WITH WHAT YOU BELIEVE TO BE TRUE, THERE'S A TENDENCY TO DISMISS, DISTORT OR DISPARAGE THE EVIDENCE SO AS TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING WHAT YOU WANT TO BELIEVE (IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER IT'S TRUE).

**When
confronted
with hardship,
rather than
believe things
AS THEY ARE,
you're enticed
to believe things
AS YOU ARE.**

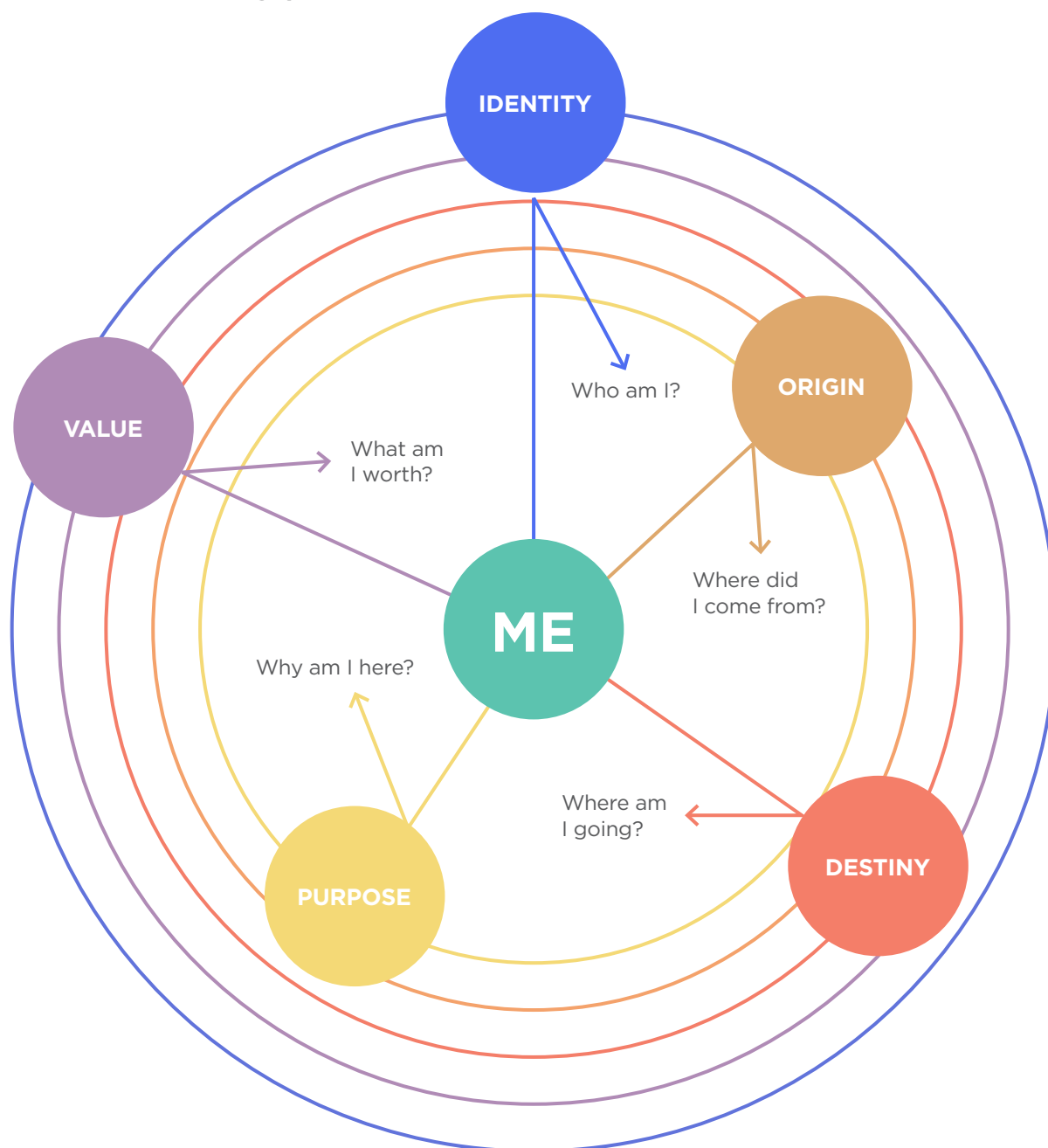
Faith versus Evidence?

Whether or not people believe in a divine Creator, everyone exercises 'faith' to draw conclusions about life, death and beyond. Faith is believing something to be true, despite the evidence not yet being conclusive. People use evidence to support what they believe, but faith is hoping their interpretation of the evidence is correct.

What do you believe?



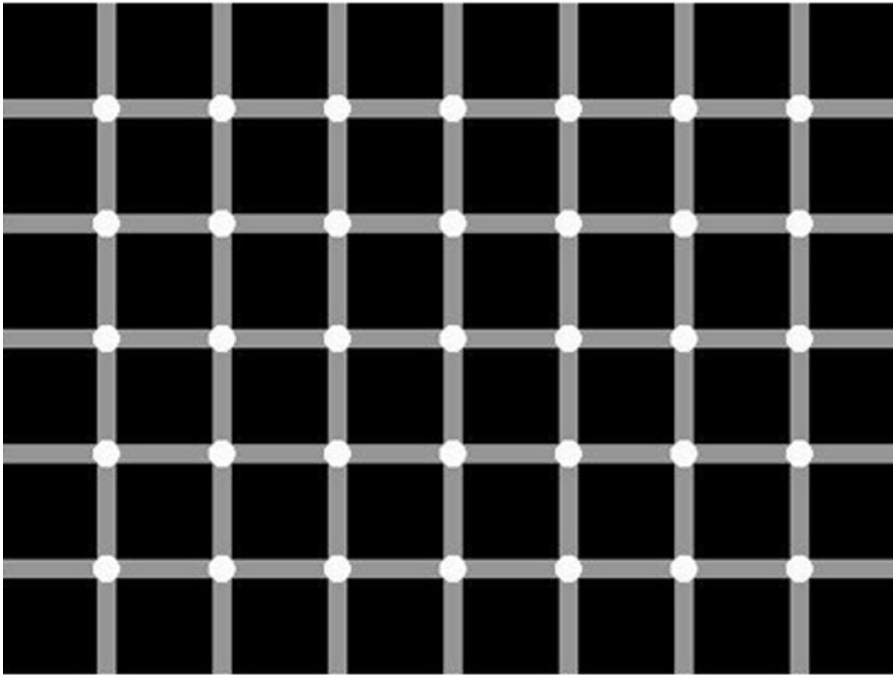
People throughout history, from diverse cultures, have adopted different belief systems in relation to the following questions:



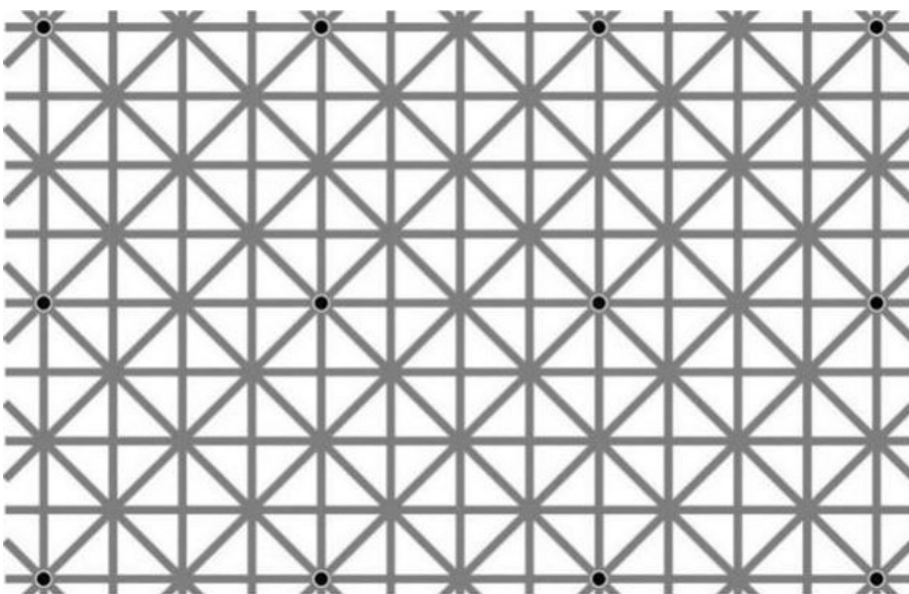
Perspective

Believing in a loving God is the foundation for gratitude, kindness and courage (other key character-strengths that help a person GROW through times of difficulty). However, when faced with tragedy, it is easy to understand why it might be difficult to believe. We don't typically believe things as 'they' are; we believe things as 'we' are. The perspective we choose to look at the evidence will influence our interpretation and judgment of it.

Do you see (a) black or (b) white dots?



There are 12 black spots in the following picture. Can you see them all at once?



In each of the black and white 'dot-perspective' pictures presented in the last activity, there was a true reality and a false reality. Looking at the same pictures from different perspectives may lead us to make different interpretations, judgments and conclusions. If, however, we are able to see different perspectives at the same time, we get to carefully choose which perception to believe in. In the same way, when faced with a critical incident or tragic circumstance, we get to choose what details we focus our attention on, and form either a positive or negative conclusion. We can either focus on the best or the worst of our circumstances. People who choose to believe in and trust a loving Divine Creator actively cultivate hope for their future. To make the right choice, you need the right perspective.



Below, five people experience the same terrible event, yet they draw five different conclusions. Match each statement with its most likely belief system.

“Well, that’s most unfortunate isn’t it. How typical. All knowing and all powerful, but couldn’t even stop that, let alone give us a warning. Go figure!”

“Wow, that was so incredibly fortunate. That could have easily been much more disastrous than it was. Thank God we survived that.”

“Funny how things seem to always work out for everyone else. I never catch a break. I guess my past is catching up with me and now it’s payback.”

“I just can’t believe it. What kind of God punishes the ones he is supposed to love? What did I ever do to deserve this? God’s as good as dead to me.”

“You win some, you lose some. It’s not like there’s some cosmic force out there influencing things. Life is as random as a roll of dice.”

God is disappointed

God is angry

God doesn’t care

God doesn’t exist

God really cares

**IF A PERSON LOOKS FOR
EVIDENCE OF PAIN AND
SUFFERING, THEY WILL SURELY
FIND IT, MAKING IT EASIER
TO CONCLUDE:**

**(A) GOD DOESN'T EXIST
(B) GOD DOESN'T CARE
(C) GOD IS DISAPPOINTED
(D) GOD IS ANGRY.**

**HOW WOULD SOMEONE
GAIN A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE
AND COME TO THE CONCLUSION
THAT GOD REALLY CARES?**

**The most
effective way
to determine
whether there's
evidence for a
loving God
is to consider
'what are you
grateful for?'**

The Good Shepherd

People typically resist change (preferring instead to stay in 'comfort zones'). For this reason, people can be like sheep. When a flock of sheep find a nice pasture, they don't like to move from it. However, the shepherd will move them on, knowing if they stay in one place for too long, they'll destroy the land. Yet, the prospect of 'moving on' can be quite scary.



Shepherds lead and guide their sheep into new pastures and protect them from predators. Sheep only lie down and rest in peace when they have eaten well. Yet, sheep typically only eat well when they feel safe and protected. Because sheep have no capacity for self-defence, they are completely dependent on their shepherd. Even though the sheep don't always get what they want (to stay in their comfort zone), a good shepherd always has the sheep's best interests at heart. A good shepherd is just like a loving God who's always looking out for you and wants the best.

Identify one of the most **POSITIVE AND TRIUMPHANT** times you've had in your life.

Q: From the experience detailed above, can you identify any evidence of how God may have helped set you up for success (i.e. provision, protection, favour, revealing His plans and purposes for you, giving you encouragement)?

You may never fully understand WHY certain things happen, but you do have an opportunity to ask the question, 'WHO is able to help make things better?'

Identify one of the most **DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING** times you've had in your life.

Q: From the experience detailed above, can you identify any evidence of how God may have helped you navigate your way through some of this problematic time (i.e. keeping you safe, getting you out of trouble, giving you hope for your future)?

BELIEVING IN A GOOD SHEPHERD IS NOT THE SAME AS BELIEVING IN THE 'EXISTENCE OF GOD', OR BELONGING TO A 'RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY', OR PARTICIPATING IN 'RELIGIOUS OR CULTURAL RITUALS'.

The decision to place one's hope and trust in a God who cares, has less to do with religion and EVERYTHING to do with relationship.