Discussion Questions

THE RETURN OF THE GOD HYPOTHESIS
by Stephen C. Meyer

Chapter 11: How to Assess a Metaphysical Hypothesis

1. "Metaphysics is the discipline of philosophy that addresses the fundamental nature of reality. Ontology, a subdiscipline of metaphysics, is concerned with questions of "being" or ultimate reality." (p. 219).
    a. What is the "ultimate reality" idea of these main worldviews:
        i. Naturalism
        ii. Pantheism
        iii. Theism
        iv. Deism
    b. Have you had any interesting "worldview" discussions with others?

2. "Many people acquire their worldview by osmosis from their surrounding culture. They often have unexamined presuppositions about the nature of nature, of human beings, or of ultimate reality." (p. 221) How did you come to be a Christian theist? Have you ever gone through a period of examining why you believe what you believe?

3. This chapter was about the challenge of assessing the question, which worldview "better explains key scientific discoveries." What door did atheist Richard Dawkins inadvertently open which helps us evaluate the "better" worldview? (p. 222-3)

4. When someone asks for proof for God, what kind of reasoning do you think people are looking for? (pp. 224-5) What kind of reasoning is better to answer this question, and why? And do you think it would be helpful to point out the difference? (pp. 224-5)

5. Meyer reformulates Dawkins' statement about the universe having "precisely the properties we should expect" as an abductive inference. Using this logical format as inspiration, how would you reply to the question, "Can you prove God exists?" (pp. 236-237)

Chapter 12: The God Hypothesis and the Beginning of the Universe

6. Why does Meyer say many theologians and theistic philosophers deny that scientific evidence can prove God's existence? (pp. 241-2). What are your thoughts?

7. Meyer gave an abductive argument for why the discovery of a finite universe supports the God hypothesis (p. 245) and said there's even stronger support for theism having better explanatory power than scientific materialism or naturalism. Of the things discussed thereafter (causal adequacy, uncaused universe, personal agency, primeval atom), which is most compelling to you? Which do you think would be most compelling to nonbelievers you know, and why?

8. What is Meyer's logic behind reasoning that if a God is a personal agent with causal powers and free will existed, that being could be expected to have caused new things to come into existence, including the universe itself? (pp. 244-5) Is that logic something you could work into a conversation with a nonbeliever?

9. Why does Meyer say "The idea of reason itself requires that human thought is not wholly determined by impersonal material forces (e.g., by external physical stimuli or chemical reactions in the brain)"? (p. 254)

10. If someone told you there's no need to posit a God because we could explain say there could be some kind of eternal single particle that was just waiting to explode, how would you respond? (pp. 254-256)

11. Do you know a Hindu or New Ager? Why is theism better supported by scientific evidence than pantheism? (pp. 256-7)

If Time Permits:

12. This book is "thick." Why are you personally motivated to devote a portion of your time to this challenge? What are your main take-aways so far? What do you hope to take away from this book?