HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Tree of Life examines themes and questions that explore who we are, where we came from, who and where is God, why we suffer, and how we should live. Using biblical imagery, The Tree of Life poses questions that have been asked for centuries. Use this guide to frame a conversation. Questions are here to help you think and explore through a biblical lens. Answer just a few, or go deeper. Enjoy the conversation!

THEME 1: ORIGINS

Read Genesis 1.1–2.4

The Tree of Life opens with a passage of Scripture from Job 38.4,7 attributing the creation of the universe to God. Throughout the film, the viewer is treated to cinematography that depicts the vast expanse of the universe, as well as the wonders and beauty of earth. Genesis 1-2 presents the biblical creation narrative, a powerful portrait of our beginnings.

Q1 Comparing the Genesis account of creation to the movie, how would you describe God and God’s engagement with creation? With people?

Q2 Does it matter how God created us? Why or why not?

Go Deeper

Psalm 19.1; Psalm 8.3-9; Psalm 139.13-16 speak of how God’s glory is revealed in nature and the importance he places on humanity.

Q1 What themes do you see in these Psalms about God’s relationship with humanity?

Q2 Why do you think God gave us an innate appreciation for nature?

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth . . . When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”
– Job 38.4,7
**THEME 2: IS GOD THERE?**
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

A central conflict in The Tree of Life, conveyed in the whispered narrations, is the questions to and about God. Is God there? Is God there for us personally? Why does God let us suffer? Does God care?

The Bible is filled with people speaking their real feelings to God. Job did it, and God responded. The Psalms also show again and again that God invites us to bring our complaints to him.

**Read Job 7.1-21**

Q1  Does it matter in everyday life whether God is near or distant? How would you think, feel, or behave differently?

Q2  Do you feel comfortable complaining to God?

**Go Deeper**

Find a Psalm that shows the Psalmist questioning God.

Q1  What do you discover in the dialogue of the Psalm you have chosen?

**THEME 3: NATURE VS GRACE**

Another central theme in The Tree of Life is the concept that we can choose to live one of two ways – one driven by nature and one driven by grace. The Father in the film (Brad Pitt) represents the way of nature and the Mother (Jessica Chastain), the way of grace. In the film, the Mother narrates: “There are two ways. The way of nature, and the way of grace. We have to choose which one to follow.”

Galatians 5.16-23 portrays the conflict for each of us between the two ways of living presented in the film. Jack describes his own internal battle as he narrates, “Father. Mother. Always you wrestle inside me. Always you will.”

**Read I John 4.7-9; Galatians 5.16-23**

Q1  From the film, what is life when we go the way of “nature” (depicted as pride, greed, self-sufficiency)?

Q2  From the film, what is life like when we go the way of “grace” (depicted as unconditional love, self-sacrifice, nurture, peace, wonder)?

**Go Deeper**

**Read I Corinthians 13 and Romans 8.5-8** and contrast the two ways of living.

Q1  What do you learn about love from these passages? State some things that love is not.