

The case for Allah's existence

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The case for Allah's existence

Unit overview

This curriculum unit serves as the first in our series on Islamic Creed, where we attempt to answer the fundamental question "What is real?". In many ways, we are our thoughts. Our awareness and consciousness determine our reality. Thoughts have the power to mold our nature and shape our destiny. Considering that thoughts have the potential to determine our present situation and our final outcome, it is worthwhile focusing on the contents of our thoughts and the ends toward which our minds should be dedicated. In the Islamic tradition, our thinking should be focused on what is real—and there is nothing more real than God Himself. Therefore, any thought, vision, or understanding that is not informed and guided by an awareness of God's overwhelming reality loses sight of the nature of things and the purpose and meaning of human life.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, tawhid, or a unitary vision of metaphysics and cosmology, is taken for granted and serves as our intellectual starting point. This worldview allows us to see that God is the origin and ultimate destiny of all things, and that God is the support and sustenance of all things at every moment. These fundamental facts provide a true comprehension of reality in order for us to properly orient ourselves in relation to our ultimate concerns as humans: returning to God. However, our current historic moment is blinded by the material powers of science, making it difficult to see the reality of God.

In this curriculum unit, we enter into the discourse on God's reality through a critique of our contemporary worldview. In many ways, the current forms of thinking have alienated humanity from knowing what is real in its fullest sense. By establishing and upholding the scientific method to be the only true means of ascertaining truth, we are limited in our ability to answer the fundamental questions that have historically intrigued humanity. After our critique of the prevailing worldview, in the first lesson, we utilize a Qur'anic framework to approach the question of God's existence. In the Qur'an, God describes and establishes His reality through two primary approaches: the heart and mind—each of which is fundamental to the very make-up of the human. In the second lesson, we explore the heart-based approach to God's Reality by highlighting the fact that every culture across time and space has attempted to connect with a transcendent being. This cross-cultural phenomenon is explained in the Qur'an as an expression of the fitra, or an intuitive human sense to seek God. This intrinsic drive to connect with transcendence has motivated cultures to produce symbols through language and images to explain the divine. However, like all other faculties in the human, the fitra too has the potential to become tainted by the external world. Thus, during the second portion of class, students will be introduced to the various stimuli that blind our intuitive sense to experience the divine.

Finally, in the third lesson, students will explore the second Qur'anic approach to establishing God's reality, which is through the intellect. Students will be introduced to two mind-based arguments that affirm God's reality through pure reason and experience: the teleological argument and the *kalam* cosmological argument. Each of these arguments have been utilized by Muslim and non-Muslim philosophers alike, both in the classical and modern periods. Through these lessons, we hope to establish that God's existence is a fact that has been historically taken as a truth that resides in the heart of every human without the need for "proof" in the modern sense.

The case for Allah's existence

Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this unit, students should be able to:

- 1 Recognize the limitations of our present-day discourse on proving God's existence and how it has been shaped by the ideological force of scientism. (cognitive)
- 2 Recognize and appreciate the varying Qur'anic approaches (heart and mind-based) for making a case for God's existence. (cognitive and affective)
- 3 Appreciate the natural human disposition, fitra, to be an appropriate means to realize the truth of God. (cognitive and affective)
- 4 Feel inclined to consider the importance of cultivating the soul to facilitate a relationship with God. (affective)
- 5 Appreciate creation and its inherent complexity as signs of God. (affective)
- 6 Understand the classical *kalam* cosmological argument and appreciate its argument's rationale from both experience and pure reason. (cognitive & affective)

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.9

Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources (including their own experiments), noting when the findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10-4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claim or a recommendation for solving a scientific or technical problem.



Instructions and activities

Lesson 1 · Science, the heart, and the mind

Lesson 2
Lesson 3



Essential Questions

How has the Scientific Revolution impacted our present-day discourse on God's existence?

How does the Qur'anic discourse on God appeal to the multidimensional nature of human beings?



Key vocabulary

Naturalism

a worldview according to which reality is exclusively governed by the physical and natural laws, containing nothing "supernatural", and that the scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the "human spirit"

Scientism

the belief that science (its tools and empirical inquiry methods) is the best and only objective means of explaining all of reality

Lesson plan 1

Science, the heart, and the Mind

Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

Lesson overview

Students will begin this unit with an introduction to the scientific revolution, which serves as the basis for our prevailing worldview. One way to describe the ideology that this revolution wrought is to use a catch-all phrase, such as scientism or the belief that the scientific method and scientific findings are the sole criterion for truth. Like most belief systems, for its believers, scientism is passively accepted without critique. Therefore, for us to establish God's reality, the first part of this lesson attempts to critique and highlight the problems of scientism. This is important because it is difficult to solve the errors of faulty thinking if we are encapsulated in faulty thinking ourselves. Of its many problems, the primary issue with scientism is its rejection of the idea that human aspirations to achieve moral or intellectual betterment have no grounding in objective reality. Scientism seriously limits our collective ability to answer fundamental questions such as "What is moral?" and "What is our purpose?"—both essential questions for living a meaningful life. Students will also recognize that the need to "prove" God is an inherently flawed discourse due to its faulty assumptions and limited methodologies of proof.

In the second part of the lesson, students will be presented with an alternate worldview to scientism inherent to Islam. As Muslims, our belief in a unified domain between God and the cosmos (tawhid) is the guide to all of our efforts. Thus, we do not distinguish between the domains of sacred and secular knowledge. In other words, knowledge of the material world through empiricism is in no conflict with metaphysics or religious knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge in Islam is always to bear witness to reality for oneself—God being the highest form of what is real. For Muslims, God serves as the anchor that renders the entire system of Islamic thinking to be meaningful and in this lesson, we will highlight the ontological necessity of God as the foundation for morality and purpose.

During the last portion of class, students will be given a Qur'anic framework for recognizing God's reality. In this framework, God establishes His existence through two primary approaches: mind-based and heart-based. By differentiating both approaches, the Qur'an presents the reality of God through a holistic means that speaks to all aspects of our humanity. It also allows for each individual to come to know God through the means that speaks most to them. In the Qur'an, neither approach is given greater importance; they complement one another in recognizing the existence of God. The following lesson plans will allow students to dive deeper into each of these unique ways of confirming God's reality.



Key vocabulary

Scientific method

an empirical method of acquiring knowledge that begins from a place of rigorous doubt/skepticism and relies on careful observation through sense- perception and interpretation of observable data to establish knowledge

Spiritual instinct

an innate recognition of a Higher Power (God) and an inclination to seek out and connect with that Higher Power



Teacher's note

The opening of this unit follows a flipped learning model in which some of the instruction occurs outside of the classroom, independent of the teacher. So before teaching this lesson, give students copies of 1.1 "Scientific Revolution" and instruct them to watch the video listed on the handout, take notes on the video's content, and respond to the three reflection questions. At the opening of this lesson, students will need their notes to partake in a discussion on the Scientific Revolution and its impact on our present-day discourse on God.

Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Recognize the limitations of our present-day discourse on proving God's existence and how it has been shaped by the ideological force of scientism. (cognitive)
- 2 Recognize and appreciate the varying Qur'anic approaches (heart and mind-based) for making a case for God's existence. (cognitive and affective)

Stage 2: Learning plan 🖍

Total time: 60 min

Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 1 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation and play videos
- Printouts of 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 for each student

Opening activity

Slide 1/Let's talk

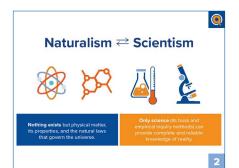
- 1. Open **slide 1**. Ask students to spend a few minutes reviewing their notes about the Scientific Revolution (1.1) with their elbow partners.
- 2. Then, facilitate a discussion around the two questions: first, what is the main idea from the video, and second, according to the pioneers of the Scientific Revolution, how can we come to know what is real? Explain that "real" refers to the true state of things as they exist, whether or not we believe it or if we, as a society, have verified or ascertained it. Toward the end of the discussion, direct students to the mind map on page three of their handout (1.1) and establish the following points:
 - a. Our present-day discourse about God's Reality is heavily shaped by the Scientific Revolution and the subsequent ideological force of scientism, which contends that science (its tools and empirical methods of inquiry) is the only reliable way to ascertain reality. In other words, we live in an historical era where science, not religion or other bodies of knowledge, is regarded as the sole vehicle for truth.
 - b. Anything that cannot be "proven" through scientific means is deemed doubtful and irrational, including the Reality of God.
 - c. While this revolution was spurred from the intellectual conflict between science and the Roman Catholic Church (ca. 16th century Europe), it is not reflective of Islam's attitude toward science. What we observe, instead, is that the scientific development in the Islamic world paralleled the development of the religious sciences, pioneered by polymaths in both the religious and worldly sciences.

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Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this opening activity is to review the video's instructional material on the Scientific Revolution, which students learned prior to this lesson. Its content is critical because it explains why we speak about God's existence today as something doubtful and in need of "scientific proof." Dating back to the 16th century, scientism (the prevailing attitude that science alone can determine what is true and real) played a pivotal role in removing God, revelation, religion, or even reason as the starting point of knowledge. Instead, we are taught to begin with a blank slate—a belief in nothing—and then accept as reality only that which is "proven" through the scientific method, through testable hypotheses and controlled observation.

This is problematic because God is unobservable and His existence is beyond what we can empirically and scientifically ascertain. In the following learning activity, students will recognize that, despite its role in the material advancement of society, the scientific method is too limited in its scope of inquiry. By demanding empirical proofs for God, we leave the Big Questions of our existence unanswered, since God is the necessary ontological anchor by which everything has meaning.





Teacher's note

If students need concrete examples of this, they may consider the way they come to know things about history, language, and the signs of trust, love, and friendship. For example, we construct our knowledge of past historical events through testimony—from transmitted reports about events we did not witness firsthand. Our knowledge of trust, love, and friendship grows with experience and memory. As early as infant hood, babies develop attachment bonds with people who consistently exhibit caring and trustworthy behavior: they continue looking for these same signs of trustworthiness in other people as they grow up. And through our sense of reason, we develop language skills as early as toddlerhood by mentally mapping out grammatical speech patterns from the conversations we hear around us.

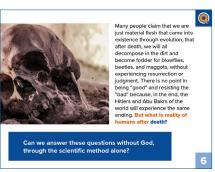
Learning activity (50 min)

Slides 2-3/Naturalism versus scientism

- Proceed to slide 2 and direct students to the vocabulary definitions on the first page of their handout (1.1). Point to naturalism and scientism. Explain these ideological forces that culminated from the Scientific Revolution, and how they dominate our present-day discourse on God's existence.
 - a. Naturalism: a belief that only physical matter, its properties, and the natural laws of the universe are real. This belief rejects God's existence and categorically discounts any supernatural or spiritual explanation of reality.
 - b. Scientism: a belief that only science (its tools and empirical methods of inquiry) can provide complete and reliable knowledge of reality. This belief relies heavily on the scientific method and empirical evidence to construct physical, observable truth.
- 2. Continue to **slide 3**. Ask students to think about the meaning behind the command to "prove that God is real." In the paradigms of naturalism and scientism, what constitutes "proof"? Why do we need empirical evidence to "prove" God's Reality? Is belief in God's Reality "irrational" and "absurd" without this kind of evidence?
- 3. Remind students that, throughout our lives, we establish knowledge through a variety of pathways: from the testimony of others, our experiences, reason, individual and shared memories, and so on.
- 4. But according to these dominating ideologies (i.e., naturalism and scientism), we can only be certain of something if it can be "proven" using the scientific method. Without "evidence," something is rendered doubtful, irrational, and conclusively absurd.







Teacher's note

While listening to students share their reflections to each question, prompt them to consider the non-empirical realities that shape our human experience: life's purpose/ meaning, morality, ethics, virtues, measures of success, and so on. Ask them if they can think of a scientific method that would help us come to know the reality of these essential parts of human existence. If we remove God from the picture because He can't be "proven" through science, how can we determine a world of meaning, purpose, and morality? Even if we could hypothetically determine a moral system built on principles of survival alone, is that a world we would want to live in?



Slides 4-6 | The real purpose of human existence, morality and death Limits of Science

- Proceed to slide 4. To illustrate the limitations of the scientific pathway to knowledge, inform students that you will showcase a series of pictures alongside alleged "answers" to big questions that we collectively pursue. Each slide ends with the question, "Can we answer these questions without God, through the scientific method alone?" Students will share their thoughts with their elbow partners and then with the whole class at the conclusion of each slide.
 - a. Slide 4, the purpose/meaning of human life: Your neighbor believes that the purpose of his existence and the meaning of life is to accumulate wealth and create the most comfortable life for himself. He doesn't value family, humanitarian aid, or charity to the needy, and he measures the success of his life by the money in his bank account. But what is the real purpose of life? Can we answer this question without God, through the scientific method alone?
 - b. Slide 5, morality: Many people claim that animals do not exist for our consumption; it is immoral to turn animals or their byproducts into food or material goods (e.g., leather, fur, flesh, milk, eggs, and so on). Killing an animal for consumption is as immoral as killing a human being. But what is real morality? Can we answer this question without God, through the scientific method alone?
 - c. Slide 6, life after death: Many people claim that we are just material flesh that came into existence through evolution; after death, we will all decompose in the dirt and become fodder for blowflies, beetles, and maggots, without experiencing resurrection or judgment. There is no point in being "good" and resisting the "bad" because, in the end, the Hitlers and Abu Bakrs of the world will experience the same ending.

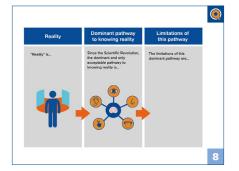
 But what is the reality of humans after death? Can we answer this question without God, through the scientific method alone?

Slides 7-8 | Reality of God-life's "big questions"

- 1. After showcasing the content from each slide, continue to **slide 7**. Explain to students that knowing what is real (the true state of things as they exist, whether or not we believe it) comes from a variety of sources. But because we live in the scientific era, we are taught to doubt what is not "proven" through science and its methods of choice.
- 2. Pose the questions, "Is the scientific method alone capable of proving the Reality of God and the answers to Life's Big Questions? Why does God need to be 'proved?'"
- 3. Facilitate a whole-class discussion around those questions. Then, toward the end of the discussion, establish the following points:
 - a. **Reality:** There is one reality, and it exists whether or not we believe it to be true. The absence of personal conviction in God's existence isn't proof that He doesn't exist.
 - Superior pathway for knowing reality: In this age of science and atheism, there is a prevailing ideological force declaring science as the superior and only acceptable pathway for knowing reality (scientism).

Everything else is treated with skepticism until it can be tested and "proven." Why do we have an infatuation with the scientific enterprise? For one, we associate the scientific enterprise and its empirical methods of inquiry with all of the medical, technological, agricultural, and economic prosperity we enjoy today. From this pathway, for example, we sent human beings to space. We mapped the geographical contours of our moon and other celestial bodies in our solar system. We discerned weather patterns across our planet and developed sophisticated tools to detect the formation of hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis before they strike. We also charted the intricacies of the human body. Through rigorous experimentation, we observed that the human body's immune system produces antibodies that detect and fight against pathogens (harmful bacteria and viruses), and that consuming certain plant foods strengthens our immune system. From this knowledge, we developed medicines and medical practices to nurse our ill back to physical health, contributing to unprecedented records of human longevity. Science is now affi liated with our present-day power structures (medical, technological, and academic institutions) and the beloved technologies it has given birth to. Consequently, we have grown excessively infatuated with science. Our prevailing attitude that science alone can provide complete and reliable knowledge of reality is built off our infatuation of these advances in modern societies.

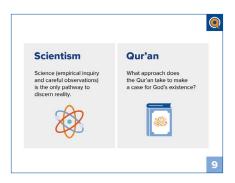
- c. **Limitations of this pathway:** Science—its empirical methods of inquiry and our sensory observations—has, no doubt, allowed our species to advance materialistically in unmeasurable ways. However, this pathway is limited. It can only test what is physical and within our reach; it can only determine the mechanics of the universe, the "what" and the "how," but not the "why." Science does not have within its scope of inquiry the ability to prove **God's Reality** or the answers to **Life's Big Questions.**
- 4. Continue to **slide 8** and pass out copies of **1.2 "The Reality of God."**Ask students to spend a few minutes creating a flowchart to summarize what they learned about the dominant pathway to knowing reality, and the limitations of these pathways in "proving" God's existence and the answers to life's Big Questions. They will also complete the reflection question beneath the flowchart about the problematic nature of the demand to "prove" God's existence.
- 5. After a few minutes, collect the handouts from students as a means of formatively assessing the first objective.



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Teacher takeaway

This instruction is designed around the first objective. From this material, students will realize that the present-day discourse on God is almost exclusively preoccupied with "proving" God's existence. This notion of "proof" is conditioned and mediated by scientific naturalism, the belief that only nature, its properties, and its physical laws are real and that science, not God or revelation, can provide complete and reliable knowledge of reality. According to this worldview, science is the sole vehicle of truth, and anything that cannot be empirically "proven"—God, especially—is dismissed as irrational.





Slide 9

- Proceed to slide 9 and explain that the first section of this lesson had students analyze the way science works to prove reality. Highlight the following: empirical inquiry and careful observations are the only means of discerning reality. While there is no conflict between Islam and science, the conflict arises when science is the sole vehicle of knowledge, causing a disregard for other human faculties.
- 2. Draw the students' attention to the second half of the slide and explain that in the next section of this lesson, they will explore how the Qur'an makes a case for God's existence. Ask students to reflect on the question: What approach does the Qur'an take to discern reality, and more specifically, God's Reality? Students may not be able to provide a concrete answer to this question yet; however, this question may help students transition from scientific discourse on God's existence to the Qur'anic discourse.

Slide 10

- 1. Proceed to **slide 10** and give students a few minutes to read through the Heart & Brain comic and the verse from Surat al-Hajj.
- 2. **Turn & Talk:** After a few minutes, ask students to talk with an elbow partner about the following questions:
 - a. What is the main idea of the comic? What is the main idea of the verse?
 - b. How do we commonly characterize the heart and the brain?
- 3. all on a few students to share their thoughts and use the takeaway below to help further explain the meaning and connection between the verse and comic.

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Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this activity is to prompt students to consider the multiple faculties we possess to discern God's Reality: our hearts, minds, and bodies (physical senses). As a result of the Scientific Revolution, science (and its empirical methods of inquiry) is highly regarded as the only reliable pathway to knowledge. Something has to be observable and testable before it can be established as "real." But are our senses the only reliable pathways to knowledge? What about our hearts? Our minds? Our instincts?

Our hearts and emotions, as in the example of the comic, are often portrayed as erratic, irrational, and incapable of discerning reality. This is contradictory to the Qur'an's characterization of the human heart. In the verse from Surat al-Hajj, Allah describes the heart as a site of knowledge and reason, perfectly capable of discerning reality. This next section will explore how the Qur'an addresses the basis of inquiry through the heart and mind—differentiating the two approaches by recognizing that the heart contains intuitive beliefs, while the mind contains reflective and conscious beliefs that result from thoughts. While the Qur'an does encourage empirical reflection of God's signs as a means of knowing Him, it does not rely on empirical reflection alone. Students will come to recognize that the Qur'an takes a multidimensional approach by engaging our various faculties of knowledge (heart, body, and mind) to discern God's Reality.



Slide 11

- 1. Proceed to **slide 11** and read the verse and translation aloud. Use the following points to help students understand the purpose behind this verse:
 - a. In the previous section, we discussed that God's existence is beyond the scope of being empirically or scientifically ascertained. Relying exclusively on the scientific method limits us to empirical conclusions about the world around us.
 - b. If we are willing to accept our empirical and logical faculties to ascertain reality, then we must also consider our spiritual faculty that drives us to believe in the metaphysical realities beyond our senses (i.e., God). The Qur'an combines both logic and experience to speak to God's existence.
 - c. If we deny our spiritual faculty, we would consequently have to question the validity of our other faculties. The mind is what is used to decipher what we experience through our five senses. Our spiritual instinct is also derived from the self—if we can trust our sensory perceptions and the empirical data they produce, we must also accept the spiritual data. This is the attitude being described through this verse: if we trust some of our faculties (i.e., empirical and rational), then we must trust others (i.e., spiritual).
 - d. Lastly, point out that the Qur'an uses a holistic approach to highlight the reality of God. This means that the Qur'an recognizes that humans have multiple dimensions which they use to draw conclusions. Explain to students that the upcoming activity, **1.3 "Qur'anic Approaches"** will further explore Qur'anic approaches to God's existence.



Teacher takeaway

The discussion on this slide brings to light the fact that to truly accept the Reality of God, we cannot fail to acknowledge all human faculties. In the previous section, students explored how the scientific method and empirical reasoning are used as the basis for theorizing the origins of the world. While Islam has no issue with science or the scientific method, it does have an issue with making empiricism the sole means of inquiry. Furthermore, the scientific method cannot answer questions of purpose and mortality, which makes other sources of inquiry necessary to discern reality.



Slide 12

- Proceed to slide 12 and give students handout 1.3 "Qur'anic Approaches." Give students fifteen minutes to read through the verses and respond to the question prompts on the handout.
- 2. After reading the verses and responding to the questions, facilitate a whole-class discussion and encourage students to briefly share their responses. After hearing student responses, use the following points to ensure student understanding of the assignment:
 - a. Heart-based reasoning: Remind students of the verse from Surat al-Hajj they read two slides back. Explain how in that verse, the heart was highlighted to be a source of reasoning for humans. In the heart-based verses students just reviewed on 1.3 "Qur'anic Approaches", the verses appeal to the heart first, by remembering God often which results in attaining peace and, second, by appealing

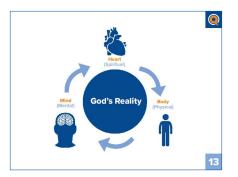
to humans intuitively by recognizing God's Reality on a deeply spiritual level. To expand this further, explain to students that the scholar Ibn Rajab states: "Knowledge is not memorizing narrations or sayings, but rather it is a light that Allah places in the heart by which a servant understands the truth and he distinguishes it from falsehood." This quote implies that the heart is used to understand and distinguish truth from falsehood. The greatest proof for the existence of God is discovered in the visceral experiences of the heart through which the believers find comfort, inner-peace, moral education, and meaning in life—the spiritual fruits of true religion.

- b. **Mind-based reasoning:** The second portion of **1.3 "Qur'anic Approaches"** encourages students to analyze verses from the Qur'an that appeal to mind-based reasoning. Naturally, humans will ask themselves big, existential questions such as: "Why am I here?" or "Why is there something and not nothing?" When reflecting on how humans, the Earth, and all components of the universe were created, the only reasonable conclusion is to recognize that the universe was created by something more powerful than itself. Taking this a step further, point out to students that when using mind-based reasoning, it is easily recognizable that everything was created with a purpose and that signs are all around us to help identify the purpose. Allah mentions many of these signs in the Qur'an such as the alternation of the night and day, the ships sailing in the sea, or in the manner the wind blows. These signs help us come to the conclusion that the universe was designed for life and was not just a random occurrence.
- c. Recognition of multiple dimensions is the primary approach used in the Qur'an to recognize God's Reality. The Qur'an is in full recognition of humans as multidimensional beings, which results in speaking with regard to all of a human being's dimensions: the heart, body, and mind. Conviction in faith is attained when the basic faculties of the heart and mind combine in reflection upon the facts of existence and the message of the Prophets. Because of its holistic approach, the Qur'an does not fall into limitations that exist with present day discourse when presenting an argument for God's Reality. Instead of limiting to only one epistemic category, the Qur'an makes an argument for God's Reality that takes a multidimensional approach.

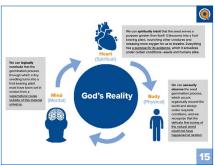


Teacher takeaway

This section and student activity highlight the way the heart and mind work together to reinforce the belief and reality of God's existence. The heart is the site where certainty of God resides, while the mind is there to help with the conviction of God in the heart. Early Muslim scholars came to the conclusion that knowledge of God resides primarily in the heart and is reinforced by reason; however, it cannot be consolidated by reason alone. Therefore, early scholars defined knowledge of God as a light within the heart. The Qur'an ignites the light within the heart in the modern world to provide an anchor that can color the world to provide meaning, purpose, and direction to individuals and society as a whole.







Consolidation (10 minutes)

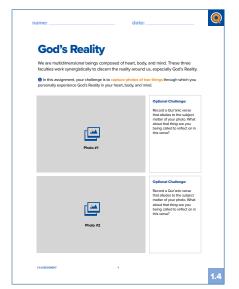
Slides 13-14

- 1. Proceed to **slide 13**. Display the diagram and use the following notes to summarize the concepts presented in this lesson:
 - a. God's Reality is beyond the scope of science and its empirical methods of inquiry. Rejecting God because He cannot be "proven" renders our existence meaningless and life's Big Questions unanswered.
 - b. We are a multidimensional creation comprised of mind, body, and soul: if we accept that we have an instinctive capacity for sensory perception (bodies) and an innate cognitive ability to reason (minds), then we must also accept the spiritual instinct that drives us to seek a Divine Power and purpose/meaning beyond our material existence (hearts). So while science and its empirical methods are valuable, contributing immensely to our material advancement, it isn't the only pathway to knowing what is real. Our hearts and spiritual instincts are also reliable centers of knowledge. Being a multidimensional creation, we must allow our hearts, minds, and bodies to work synergistically to affirm God's Reality.
 - c. We can experience God's Reality on a spiritual, mental, and physical level by examining the many signs around and within us.
- Proceed to slide 14 and play the video. While they watch the process of seed germination, ask students to use their spiritual, mental, and physical faculties to reflect on God's Reality.
- 3. After the video, call on some students to share their reflections.
- 4. Proceed to **slide 15** and display the diagram filled in with supporting details from the video to highlight the way our faculties work synergistically to discern God's Reality around us. Watching the seed germinate, we can...
 - a. sensorily observe the seed germination process, which occurs organically around the world and always under requisite conditions, and we recognize that the delicate fine-tuning of the natural world could not have happened at random.
 - b. logically conclude that the germination process through which a tiny seedling turns into a fruit-bearing plant could not have emerged from nothing; it must have been set in motion from a supernatural cause outside of this material universe.
 - c. **spiritually intuit** that the seed serves a purpose greater than itself: it blossoms into a fruit-bearing plant, nourishing other creatures and releasing more oxygen for us to breathe. Everything has a purpose for its existence, which it actualizes under specific conditions—seeds and humans alike.



Teacher takeaway

This consolidation serves as a wrap-up of this lesson and as a preview into the summative assessment students will complete at home. Limiting our knowledge of reality to what science can empirically observe is problematic because it dismisses our multidimensional nature and two other equally reliable faculties of knowledge: our hearts and minds. Science alone cannot provide complete and reliable knowledge of reality, and deferring to God/supernatural explanations is necessary for us to live a life filled with purpose. Viewing everyday signs, such as seed germination or the rising and setting of the sun, requires recognizing and using multiple faculties which ultimately will lead us to the recognition of God's Reality.



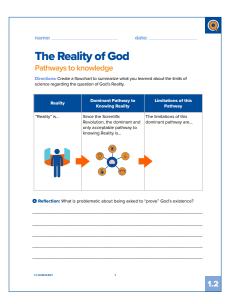
Homework

Pass out a copy of **1.4 "Homework"** to each student. In this assignment, students will be summatively assessed on this lesson's second objective, which focuses on our multidimensional nature and need for a heart and mind-based approach to knowing God's existence. Below are the assignment instructions:

- 1. First, students will capture photos of two things through which they personally experience God's Reality in a multidimensional way: in heart (spiritually), in body (physically), and in mind (mentally). Note that these photos have unlimited possibilities, so encourage creativity! Their photos can range from dew droplets at dawn to a sentimental display of human affection, or from an aesthetic food spread to the cover of a favorite novel.
- 2. Second, students will describe their two photos. On the diagrams, students will identify the subject matter of each photo and then explain the way they spiritually, physically, and mentally experience God's Reality through the thing being captured. Note that the lesson's consolidation modeled this assignment for students using the example of the seed germination process. Remind students of that example to help them successfully complete the diagrams independently. The following sentence frames may be given to students that need additional scaffolding:
 - a. Heart: Looking at the ___(subject matter)___, I spiritually intuit...
 - b. Body: Looking at the __(subject matter)___, I sensorily observe (or physically sense)...
 - c. Mind: Looking at the ___(subject matter)___, I logically conclude...

The objective is to demonstrate how, when observing the thing in the photo, our hearts, bodies, and minds work synergistically to experience God's Reality.

- 3. Third, students will design, cut, and build a cube. Once students complete the diagram, they will create a cube that will be used to record how the photo's subject matter helps experience God's Reality through the heart, body, and mind. There are two squares related to each faculty where students will record their connections.
- 4. At the end of the assignment, we have provided a rubric for student self-assessment. We encourage you to use this rubric as well to gauge student performance, or to modify it as necessary.





Stage 3: Assessments

Performance tasks

Formative assessment

- To formatively assess the first objective, have students complete the flowchart on 1.2 "The Reality of God". They will first evaluate our society's prevailing attitude that God's existence must be doubted until empirically proven, and that scientific naturalism is the sole vehicle of truth. After deconstructing that attitude, students will then explain the limitations of science and scientific inquiry as the only reliable way of discerning reality.
- 2. The student activity on 1.3 "Qur'anic Approaches" will be used to informally assess the second objective. After being presented with mind-based and heart-based rationales from the Qur'an, students will analyze how the Qur'an takes a holistic approach in addressing the multidimensional nature of humans. By reading through the verses and reflecting on the relationship they have to affirming God's Reality, students will be able to recognize and appreciate the approaches the Qur'an takes to combine spiritual instinct and experience along with logic and reason to develop certainty of God's Reality.

Summative assessment

See 1.4 "Homework" above.



Instructions and activities

Lesson 1 Lesson 2 • Fitra: our primordial nature Lesson 3



Essential Questions

Is there an internal drive within humans that pushes us to be God-centered? Can we identify this faculty? How can we cultivate it? What taints it?



Key vocabulary

Fitra

the pristine, primordial nature upon which God created every human being, which drives humans toward God, purpose, and spiritual, moral, and intellectual excellence

Lesson plan 2

Fitra: Our Primordial Nature

Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

Lesson overview

In the first lesson, students were introduced to two ways to establish God's existence: through the heart and the mind. In this lesson, students will dive further into the heart-based approach. People have long wondered and debated about human nature—are there some behaviors that arise naturally from the human being and others that arise solely due to the influence of the surrounding culture? How can we explain why every culture across time and space has had rituals of worship to seek transcendence? The Qur'an presents us with an explanation through the doctrine of "fitrat Allah". The fitra refers to the natural constitution of human beings or the pure and pristine original state upon which God created all human beings. The Qur'an presents the most fundamental aspect of the fitra as the spiritual inclination toward God, expressing one's love of God in prayer and gratitude, and striving to come closer to God. The human's natural state also encompasses an inclination toward that which is morally and spiritually pure, upright and wholesome.

In this lesson, students will explore the inner workings of the *fitra* and the feelings of loss and anxiety when we do not serve our inner human-calling toward transcendence. The *fitra* is like having an internal compass that always points in the direction of good works that bring us closer to God. However, without guidance and proper sustenance, the *fitra* is corruptible. Accordingly, in the second part of this lesson, students will explore the various worldly pursuits that agitate and attempt to cover up this intuitive sense. A human being can distract oneself from the deeper questions of life by pursuing fleeting bodily pleasures as many do or challenge oneself to engage in a serious search for meaning. The *fitra* is thus composed of a conceptual apparatus with ethical, spiritual, and intellectual processing functions by which the external reality is rendered meaningful and life's journey toward God is appropriately conceived.

Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- 1 Appreciate the natural human disposition, *fitra*, to be an appropriate means to realize the truth of God. *(cognitive and affective)*
- 2 Feel inclined to consider the importance of cultivating the soul to facilitate a relationship with God. (affective)

Teacher's note

Before teaching this lesson, set up the gallery walk for the opening activity. To do this, you will need to print one colored copy of 2.1 "Gallery Walk" and hang the photos around the classroom where they are visible and accessible to all students. You will also need to cut the copies of 2.2 "Gallery Walk Reflection" in half, as each page contains two sets of the reflection questions.

The Qur'an refers to human religious nature as *fitrat Allah*, the instinctive and inherent disposition with which God created people. It is this disposition that allows us as human beings to sense the existence of God by pure instinct, outside of logical reasoning or interaction with prophetically revealed texts. One of the primary objectives of this lesson is to establish the human fitra as a heart-based approach for recognizing God's existence. We accomplish this through three avenues:

- **A. Humanity's collective experience:** In the opening gallery walk, students will reflect on the historical and cross-cultural phenomenon of spiritual expression.
- **B. Our personal experience:** In the movie clip and journaling prompt, students will reflect on their individual experiences feeling instinctively inclined toward God, morality, and purpose, while deriving inner-peace from nourishing their fitra.
- C. Islamic scripture: In the close-reading activity, students will reflect on the Qur'anic explanation for spirituality as a personal, historical, and cross-cultural phenomenon—the site of which is the fitra—using three verses as anchor texts.





Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 60 min

Supplies/equipment 🖋

- Lesson plan 2 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation and play videos
- Printout of 2.1 for teacher
- Printouts of 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 for students
- Printouts of 2.3 and 2.6 (optional) for teacher
- Highlighter for each student

Opening activity (15 min)

Slides 1-3

- Open slide 1. While passing out copies of 2.2 "Gallery Walk Reflection", inform students that they will participate in a gallery walk. They have five minutes to silently walk around the room, observe the collection of photos, and reflect on the following questions (2.2):
 - a. Describe the photos. What do you observe?
 - b. What are the people gaining or seeking to gain from the activities captured in the photos?
 - c. What do you think drives people to experience this historical and cross-cultural phenomenon?
 - d. What do these photos suggest about human nature?
- Think, Write, Share: After five minutes, call students back to their seats and transition to slide 2 to display some of the photos from the gallery walk. Ask them to spend a couple of minutes recording their answers to the reflection questions on 2.2.
- 3. Then, facilitate a whole-class discussion around the questions. Call on many students to determine the common thread between all of the photos and what they think may be the source of that commonality.

During the discussion, seek to accomplish two things. **First,** highlight the human universality of spiritual expression as well as the visceral feeling of inner-calm people derive from spiritual practices. While pointing to the gallery photos, emphasize that human beings throughout history and across all cultures intuitively sense the existence of God—or what they perceive as a transcendent, higher power beyond the physical world—with or without a prophetic revelation to guide them.

Even modern-secular people have developed ways to satiate their spiritual fervor with what is labeled "new age spirituality." Tracing back to the mid-twentieth century, this form of spirituality (such as meditation, yoga, tarot-reading, astrology, mediumship, etc.) persists outside of organized religions and their respective institutions and uses secularized language to rationalize its purpose. Rituals and practices that induce mystical and transcendental states also continue; for example, the use of psychedelics and transcendental meditation (TM) aim to fulfill this

universal human drive but do so without the use of religious language.

We observe from these examples that the need to seek out, conceptualize, and connect with the divine is a historical and cross-cultural phenomenon, instinctive to all people in the same way that eating, drinking, procreating, cultivating relationships, and communicating through language is instinctive. The question we must ask ourselves is, "What is the site of this spiritual instinct?"

Second, keep note of what students believe is the site of this spiritual instinct. Rather than providing the answer, listen and observe whether or not the students know to attribute it to the *fitra*, the primordial human disposition which will be explained in the beginning of this lesson's instruction.

- 4. Continue to **slide 3**. Inform students that they are going to watch a scene from the film adaptation of the memoir *Eat, Pray, Love*, written by Elizabeth Gilbert.
- 5. Play the movie clip. Afterward, share the following commentary with students: In this clip from the movie adaptation, Gilbert is seen in her large, newly-purchased house in a prestigious suburb of New York. She is at the pinnacle of success: married, educated, well-traveled, and celebrating successive milestones in her bustling writing career. Yet despite all of that, Gilbert finds herself in a state of misery and what she describes as "life-threatening despair." A month of midnight meltdowns culminates into something unusual for Gilbert: prayer. She slips out of bed and into the bathroom, and in a moment of spontaneous spirituality, she collapses onto her knees and begs God for guidance regarding what she feels is an unhappy marriage.

"And so the prayer narrowed itself down to that simple entreaty—*Please tell me what to do*— repeated again and again," she narrates.

What is interesting is that Gilbert opens her prayer with an apology to God for her spiritual disconnect. Praying, she says, is "such a foreign concept" to her that she almost begins her prayer with "I'm a big fan of Your work." Nonetheless, she persists in prayer, hoping that a sincere supplication to God will grant her guidance and clarity through her overwhelming grief.

6. Explain to students that this clip is an anecdotal illustration of a broader human tendency: to recognize our intrinsic need for God and to call to Him in moments of neediness, despair, or life- threatening danger, as the verse from Surat Yunus [10:12] reminds us: "And when humankind is touched with hardship, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side, or sitting, or standing..."

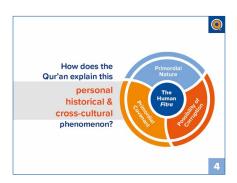
وَإِذَا مَسَّ ٱلْإِنسَانَ ٱلضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجُنْبِهِ ٓ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَآمِّكاً

7. Invite students to share their thoughts on the movie scene and the verse from Surat Yunus. Ask them if they have ever experienced or witnessed prayer as an instinctive reaction to intense hardship.



Teacher's note

The memoir *Eat, Pray, Love* is about a successful modern woman. The protagonist, Elizabeth Gilbert, initiates a divorce from her husband in her early thirties and spends the following year traveling around the world, seeking fulfillment in foreign cuisine (eat), spirituality (pray), and a romantic relationship (love).



Teacher's note

In the following section, students will explore the Qur'anic explanation for what they observed as a personal, historical, and cross-cultural phenomenon of spiritual expression. The Qur'an asserts that the innate, natural state of the human is belief in God, and the site of this spiritual instinct is the fitra. The hadith corpus provides more commentary on the fitra. However, in this lesson, we focus on two Qur'anic verses (Surat Rum, 30:30 and Surat al-A'raf, 7:172). Students will work in small groups to complete a close reading of these texts. During the follow-up discussion, encourage students to share their own connections, reflections, and questions about the fitra before providing any instructional material.

Some students may regard this approach (i.e., using the Qur'an to establish the heartbased approach to God's existence) as tautological and circular. However, a shared thematic flaw amongst all of the arguments against Islam is that none of them actually confront the epistemological force of the Qur'an in legitimizing its own establishment as the word of God—that is, the literary miracle of the text. As is well-known, the Qur'an challenges its reader or interlocutor on many occasions to bring a surah/chapter like itself. It is this specific challenge that needs to be met by atheists in order to undermine the textual legitimacy of the Qur'an and therefore Islam more broadly. The Qur'an comes with its own falsification criterion. The atheist or other, if he truly wishes to negate the Islamic worldview, needs to prove that the Qur'an is not a literary miracle.

*The term "primordial," which appears here in two contexts, may need to be defined for students. It is a Latin term combining the suffixes primus (meaning "first") and ordiri (meaning "to begin"). So in the context of our human nature, the term "primordial" refers to the fundamental aspects of the human being from the time of its original creation—the human being's default factory setting, so to speak. Our second usage of the term refers to the covenant between God and all of humanity, which is described as "primordial" in that it occurred at the beginning of time prior to our earthly existence (see Surat al-A'raf, 7:172).

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Teacher takeaway

In this two-part opening activity, the gallery walk and the movie clip, students explore outward manifestations of spirituality and our instinctive drive toward God on two levels: the collective and the personal.

The purpose of this movie clip and commentary is to further establish the reality of the fitra. Ingrained with knowledge of God's existence, the fitra propels our prayer instinct; it manifests most sincerely and instinctively when we experience overwhelming neediness, despair, or life-threatening danger. There are many cases of people for whom a near-death experience is a catalyst toward spiritual/ religious growth. This phenomenon is consistent with the Qur'anic view: "When humankind suffers some affliction, he prays to his Lord and turns to Him, but once he has been granted a favor from God, he forgets the One he had been praying to and sets up rivals to God, to make others stray from His path" [Surat az-Zumar, 39:8]. Various verses iterate a similar commentary on the fitra's prayer instinct.

When reflecting upon mystical experiences, Muhammad Iqbal notes in his work, The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought, "The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion." We each have an instinct or an impulse to believe that there is something greater that goes beyond ourselves; reality cannot be fully explained by our senses alone and that there must be something greater and more enduring. This is manifest in all cultures through art, poetry, mythology, rituals, and religious traditions, humans until today have attempted to conceptualize, describe, and experience the Divine. This realization will segue into a larger conversation about the fitra, e.g., the intrinsic drive all humans have to believe in God.

Learning activity (50 min)

Slide 4-6

- Proceed to slide 4 and pose the following question to the class: "How does the Qur'an explain this personal, historical, and cross-cultural phenomenon?"
- 2. To set up the student-led exploration of this question, distribute highlighters and copies of **2.3 "The Human** *Fitra*" to the class. Ask students to form groups of 3-4 with whom they will closely read and discuss the scriptural texts about the site of humanity's spiritual instinct.

They will have ten minutes to accomplish these tasks:

- a. First, read the text under "Part I: Reading."
- b. Second, continue to "Part II: Close-Reading & Discussion." Study the two Qur'anic verses that explain the site of this spiritual instinct (i.e., the *fitra*), jotting your notes along the margins and highlighting anything that you want to discuss with your group.
- c. Third, have a group discussion about the two Qur'anic verses. What thoughts, feelings, and questions arise as you read each text? Which words or phrases stick out? What connections are you making between the verses and yourself? The verses and the world around you? The verses and other things you have read or seen recently? And lastly, what is the main idea of each text? Record your connections, reflections, and questions on the table.
- 3. After ten minutes, transition to slide 5 and redirect student attention to the first of two texts about the fitra. To facilitate this whole-class discussion, toggle between slides five and six, recite each text aloud, and invite students to share the personal connections, reflections, and questions they formed during their group study. You may consult the



So turn your face toward the true, natural way of life, as a seeker of truth—God's choser fitra (primordial disposition) upon which He has formed humanity. There is no substituting the primary state of God's creation. That is the correct way of life, though most people fail to realize it. [30-30]

فَأَقَمْ وَجُهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَيْيَهُا * فِطْرَت اللَّهِ الَّي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا *لا تَبْدِيلَ فِلْقِ اللَّهِ * ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْفَيِّمَ وَلَنْكِنَّ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لا يَعْلَمُونَ

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following notes on each text to further engage students, to clarify any misunderstandings, and to help deepen their appreciation of the *fitra*.

Slide 5, the primordial nature

Text: So turn your face toward the true, natural way of life, as a seeker of truth—God's chosen *fitra* (primordial disposition) upon which He has formed humanity. There is no substituting the primary state of God's creation. That is the correct way of life, though most people fail to realize it. [Surat ar-Rum, 30:30]

فَأَقِمْ وَجُهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا -فِطْرَتَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّتِي فَطَرَ ٱلنَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا -لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ ٱللَّهِ -ذَلِكَ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكُثَرَ ٱلنَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Commentary: According to the Islamic paradigm, the most fundamental aspects of human nature were formed before existence —not at birth, as is commonly believed, nor strictly through the interplay of nature (genetics) and nurture (environment). This verse delineates some of these fundamental aspects of humanity and contends that they cannot be substituted. What are these fundamental aspects? First and foremost, every human soul is instinctively hanif or monotheistic (not to be confused with "Muslim") and enters this world stamped with the innate tendency toward a monotheistic way of life. This strong desire to connect with the Divine Reality, this historical and cross-cultural phenomenon of spiritual expression, is the working of the fitra, i.e., the pristine, primordial disposition upon which God created every human being. Perfectly poised to receive guidance, the fitra works like an internal compass. It remains oriented toward three things—spirituality (pure monotheism, truth, and purpose), morality (loving compassion, justice, and virtuous character, and abhorring their opposites), and intellectuality (truth, meaning, and language/communication)—with or without prophetic guidance, unless corrupted by negative, external effects.

Slide 6, the primordial covenant

Text: And remember when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and had them testify regarding themselves. [Allah asked] "Am I not your Lord?" They replied, "Yes, You are, we testify." [He cautioned] "Now you have no right to say on Judgment Day, 'We were not aware of this." [Surat al-A'raf, 7:172]

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِيَ ءَادَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِيَّتُهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ عَالُواْ بَلَى «شَهِدْنَا هَأَن اتَقُولُواْ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيْمَةِ إِنَّاكُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَفِلِينَ تَقُولُواْ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيْمَةِ إِنَّاكُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَفِلِينَ

Commentary: This verse is called ayat al-mithaq (آية الميثاق), or the verse of the treaty, because it recounts the primordial covenant God took with all of humanity before our earthly existence. In this metaphysical exchange, every soul experienced the Reality of God; every soul bore witness to its true monotheistic faith, thus stamping into memory its knowledge of God and precipitating its journey to remembering God throughout its lifetime on earth. Interestingly, the question God posed in that exchange—"Am I not your Lord?"—is rhetorical, meaning that the answer was already known to the souls being questioned. In other words, every human soul instinctively affirms God's existence and is compelled to seek Him, though this tendency may diminish due to distraction and/or corruption.



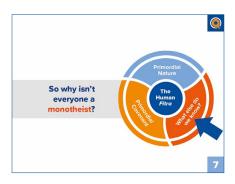
- 4. At the conclusion of the discussion, reiterate the main idea of each verse for students, which they should cross-check with their individual responses on **2.3**.
- 5. a. Surat Rum, 30:30 | The main idea of this verse is that every human being was created upon the *fitra* (the primordial disposition) which orients him or her toward the belief in God, moral education, and intelligence.
- 6. b. Surat al-A'raf, 7:172 | The main idea of this verse is that every human *fitra* has an intimate imprint of God's existence and bore witness to God's Reality prior to its earthly existence.

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Teacher takeaway

The objective of this section is to first explain our collective and personal tendencies toward spirituality through the reality of the fitra. According to the Qur'an, this historical and cross-cultural phenomenon of spiritual expression stems from human instinct, the site of which is the fitra. This fitra is ingrained with the spiritual, moral, and intellectual imperatives that drive human behavior in the unified pursuit of God (or whatever people perceive as a Higher Power). The close-reading activity students completed earlier may also help them appreciate the Qur'an's holistic approach to the question of God's existence. Unlike present-day discourse on God and reality—which is shaped by radical skepticism, scientism, the rejection of the spiritual faculty, and the demand for empirical proofs—the Qur'anic approach to God's existence considers the human as a tripartite being, consisting of mind, body, and soul. It stresses our spiritual faculty as a valid epistemological gateway to knowing God, in addition to our empirical/physical and logical means of attaining knowledge of Him. With the affirmation of the fitra, the Qur'an establishes God's existence not as a hypothesis in need of proof, but rather, as an uncontested, fundamental matter known instinctively by the fitra. In other words, the belief in God is universal and not in need of theologizing, as this section concludes.

Muslims have a long and dynamic tradition that stresses the spiritual component of human existence as a valid epistemological gateway to God, in addition to the empirical and logical means of attaining knowledge of Him. An important component of the atheist movement is to either reject the spiritual aspect of the human being or to reduce it to mere brain signals. Thus, spirituality is not considered to be a valid epistemic criterion on their account. Muslims should acknowledge this point of departure as a feature of the dialogue between atheists and theists, but they should not forget that the spirit is the fundamental core of human existence within the Islamic framework. Furthermore, they should bear in mind that the nourishment of the spirit, mind, and body occurs within the inseparable and triangular balance between the various sciences of Islamic studies including jurisprudence, Sufism, and dialectic theology: one cannot be raised above the other, nor can one dispose of any of the three.



Slides 7-8

- 1. Proceed to **slide 7** and pose the following question to students: "If every child is created upon the *fitra* and born oriented toward pure monotheism (the belief and submission to One God), why isn't everyone a monotheist?" In other words, what accounts for the discrepancy between the primordial state of human beings and how some people live today?
- 2. To explore this discrepancy, students will turn to "Part III: Continued Discussion" on their handout (2.3) and collaborate with an elbow partner to complete a close-reading of the hadith. As with the first close-reading exercise, they will also form personal connections, reflections, and questions about the text and record their notes in the table.
- 3. After a few minutes, direct student attention to the next slide (slide 8). Recite the hadith narration aloud and invite students to share the personal connections, reflections, and questions they formed during their close-reading. You may consult the following notes on each text to further

✓ Teacher's note

For a meaningful discussion on this subject, ask students to share personal stories about the impact that various worldviews incongruous with reality/morality have had on their belief in God (or stories about unnamed friends and family). Or, perhaps, you may share your own stories about people you know who experienced a tainted fitra and an impaired moral compass due to overwhelming external influences. The examples may be mild, such as the case with someone becoming distracted from God in the relentless pursuit of materialistic pleasures, or more severe, as the case with someone who adopts scientism and rejects God's existence until some empirical proof is presented to them. In any event, supply students with an example from your personal life that will engender openness as they share theirs.



engage students, clarify any misunderstandings, and help deepen their understanding of the *fitra*'s likelihood of being corrupted.

Slide 8, the possibility of corruption

Text: Prophet Muhammad (s) said, "No child is born except upon the *fitra*, though his parents [may] raise him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian, etc., just as an animal is born whole—do you see any part of its body amputated or deformed?" [Bukhari & Muslim]

Commentary: As stated earlier, the *fitra* is perfectly poised to receive guidance, and it remains oriented toward pure monotheism, truth, purpose, and moral education unless corrupted by negative, external effects. These negative pollutants originate in our environment, primarily from family influences, societal and cultural pressures, media, societal and cultural pressure, satanic whispering, and so on. An atheistic upbringing, for example, may bury one's belief in God or a Higher Power. A secular society may condition one to believe that there is no absolute purpose for human existence; that we can each determine our own version of "truth" and define morality according to what makes us happy.

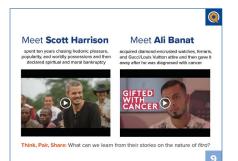
Humanity is home to millions of these manufactured ideologies and worldviews, some of which are aberrations from our primordial human nature. To follow any of them against the better judgment of the *fitra* is akin to an animal amputating part of its body: each is left feeling invariably defective and un-whole.

So while the *fitra* is pure upon a child's birth, imprinted with knowledge of God and bound by its primordial covenant with Him, it is also susceptible to corruption throughout a child's lifetime. The role of prophets and revelation is to simply awaken and reinforce the disposition that is already inside us.

4. Conclude the discussion by stating the hadith narration's main idea: Every human being is born upon the *fitra*, and every one of us, Muslim or non-Muslim, enters this physical world with an innate set of beliefs and motivations that orients us in the direction of God and His guidance. However, our *fitras* are likely to be corrupted from negative, external effects. Regardless of any suboptimal influences and pressures we experienced growing up, it is our individual responsibility to rectify our *fitras* in order to achieve a meaningful, God-oriented existence, moral uprightness, and a true sense of fulfillment.

Teacher takeaway

So far in this lesson, students have been introduced to two social phenomena that occur on a mass scale. The first is the cross-cultural phenomenon of individuals praying and engaging in rituals that call upon a transcendent being, as was demonstrated through the gallery walk activity. The second is the contemporary phenomenon where people actively deny the possibility of God's existence due to ideological beliefs, such as scientism and naturalism. From the Qur'an and hadith, we learn why these phenomena exist. Every human being is created with an innate disposition to believe in God, known as the fitra. This "God-sense", however, is easily corruptible. Given the ideological forces that characterize our historical moment, a growing number of individuals deny God's existence. The primary takeaway for students here is to realize that, despite the corruption of the fitra leading to the denial of God, every human maintains this Godsense and therefore has the potential to steer back to their natural disposition. It is also worth recognizing that when humanity moves away from cultivating this inner sense, they feel empty and without purpose. In the next section, students will learn the story of two individuals, one from a Christian upbringing and another from a Muslim upbringing, who pursued a hyper-materialistic lifestyle, and upon finding it unsatisfactory, returned to their fitri senses.



Slides 9-10

- 1. Proceed to **slide 9**. Inform students that they will watch video clips about two unique individuals: Scott Harrison and Ali Banat. As they listen to Harrison and Banat's stories, they should reflect on the message each story is communicating about the consequences of corrupting the *fitra*, and our individual imperative to restore it, cultivate it, and reclaim its higher purpose.
- 2. Give students a brief biography of each individual and then play the video clips:

Meet Scott Harrison: Scott grew up with a loving Christian family in a Philadelphia suburb. At the age of four, his mother became ill from carbon-monoxide poisoning, so Scott began taking care of her in between school, work, piano practice, and Church services. Then, at the age of eighteen, Scott's life took a complete turn. He left home and spent ten years working as a nightclub and party promoter in Manhattan, where he chased after pleasure, popularity, and worldly possessions.

Meet Ali Banat: Ali was a young Australian- Muslim businessman of Lebanese descent. Through his self-built security and electrical company, Ali quickly became a successful millionaire before the age of thirty and built a reputation for a luxurious, materialistic lifestyle. He spent his twenties traveling the world and accumulating diamond-encrusted watches, ferraris, and a limited-edition wardrobe from high-end brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton. He persisted in his materialistic pursuits until, one day, Ali was diagnosed with stage-four cancer—the "gift," as Ali called it, that opened his eyes to the Reality of God and His existence and inspired his spiritual awakening. Ali died in Ramadan at the age of thirty-six.

3. Think, Pair, & Share: After playing both clips, ask students to reflect on and discuss the following question with an elbow partner, "How come material pleasures do not produce a fully satisfactory life?" After a few minutes, call on some students to share. 4. Conclude the discussion with the following:

Living in contradiction to the *fitra* (**Scott's story**): Scott's story is archetypal of the short-lived happiness and subsequent emptiness humans experience when consumed by materialism and an immoral way of life.

Scott spent ten years chasing hedonic pleasures. Bouncing between casinos, night lounges, and strip clubs, he was earning a fortune promoting and selling alcohol at New York's busiest parties, yet what he felt at the pinnacle of that pursuit wasn't what he expected. "Although it looked glamorous on the outside, there was a long decline in happiness," Scott admits. "I remember just feeling so unhealthy about it all [...] I was spiritually bankrupt; I was emotionally bankrupt; I was certainly morally bankrupt. I tried to find my way back to a very lost faith." From his story and the story of many others, we learn that corrupting the *fitra* and depriving it of what it craves—a relationship with the Divine, and the spiritual, moral, and existential direction provided by that relationship—inevitably leads to feelings of emptiness and perpetual discontent. Perhaps this is why the Prophet (s) compared the person with a corrupted *fitra* to a deformed animal with an amputated limb: both are no longer healthy and whole.

Living in alignment with the *fitra* (**Ali's story**): Ali's story is archetypal of the heedlessness people often fall into when immersed in material abundance, and the spiritual awakening they often experience when struck with hardship. Before Ali was diagnosed with stage-four cancer, he had dedicated his life in pursuit of luxuries and material comforts, which he gradually acquired with the success of his business. But news of his cancer diagnosis instantly opened his eyes to the shallowness of his materialistic way of life and reoriented him toward God, moral uprightness, and greater purpose. "Driving [a \$600,000 Ferrari spider] like this doesn't really cross my mind anymore," Ali said in an interview. "This is the last thing I want to chase." He then spent his final days establishing charities and building mosques, which he described as more meaningful to him and his relationship with God than everything he ever owned.

Ali's story teaches us that when we orient ourselves toward God, moral uprightness, and greater purpose, we experience the spiritual fruits of inner-peace that no amount of hedonic pleasure, popularity, and worldly possessions can provide.

5. Continue to **slide 10** and read aloud the following statement made by successful Hollywood actor and comedian Jim Carrey: "I wish everybody could get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer." Explain that his statement captures something we all know intuitively through the *fitra*: that is, the material world—meaning pleasure, popularity, and worldly possessions—only provides us temporary satisfaction. Living a God-less existence and depriving the *fitra* what it seeks of spirituality, purpose, and moral education will lead to an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction that can only be lifted by cultivating and living in alignment with the *fitra*.



Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this section is tied to this lesson's second objective—that is, to help students feel some consideration for the importance of cultivating their fitra, and some awareness of the external influences and individual behaviors that may be corrupting it. Every fitra craves a relationship with God. Scott Harrison and Ali Banat's stories highlight the emptiness and dissatisfaction we feel when we neglect this instinctive need and falsely believe that materialistic and hedonic pursuits can substitute our relationship with God. In reality, no amount of materialistic success or hedonic pleasure can fill the void that remains from a deprived fitra. The greatest proof for the existence and Lordship of Allah, then, is discovered in the visceral experiences of the heart through which the believers find comfort, inner-peace, moral education, and meaning in lifethe spiritual fruits of true religion. The Qur'an promises those who have faith that they will live a "good life" and move into an infinitely greater existence in the afterlife. The peace that believers experience in this life is only a brief taste of the peace to come in the Hereafter. Reflecting upon this fact day after day in prayer contributes to a state of calm and tranquility. The Prophet 🏶 said, "Wealth is in the heart and poverty is in the heart. Whoever is wealthy in his heart will not be harmed no matter what happens in the world. Whoever is impoverished in his heart will not be satisfied no matter how much he has in the world. Verily, he will only be harmed by the greed of his own soul. As a result, those who achieve this state of being— along with their basic worldly needs—are truly the wealthiest people in the world. The soul is not of this world so it can not be fulfilled with things of this world" [Tabarani]. The contentment described in Islamic texts is a state of stability that protects believers from oscillating between extremes of momentary euphoria and sorrow, such that they can remain in a state of calm and tranquility regardless of what happens in their lives.

Allegory of the Fitra

legory: a visual story that uses objects and figures symbolically in orde convey a deeper message about spirituality, morality, politics, etc.

Create an allegory of the fitra! Choose one of the following:

- Absence of God | The consequences of living a God-less life: corrupting the *fitra* through negative, external influences and immoral behavior and rejecting its instinctive needs
- Presence of God | The consequences of living a God-centered life cultivating the fitro through positive, external influences and moral behavior and nourishing its instinctive needs

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The Allegory of Fitra



Teacher's note

If this specific literary device (i.e., allegory) is too challenging for students to apply to the fitra, you may modify this project by asking them to develop a metaphor of the fitra instead

Slide 11

- 1. Proceed to slide 11 and pass out copies of 2.4 "The Allegory of the Fitra".
- 2. Tell students that they will demonstrate their understanding of the fitra, and the implications of cultivating or corrupting it, in a take-home project. The objective of this project is to create an allegory of the fitra in short-story form along with an accompanying diorama (i.e., a three- dimensional visual representation of their allegory). This allegory must use objects and figures symbolically in order to convey a deeper message about one of the following:
 - a. Absence of God: The consequences of living a God-less life: corrupting the fitra through negative, external influences and immoral behavior and rejecting its instinctive needs
 - b. **Presence of God:** The consequences of living a God-centered life: cultivating the fitra through positive, external influences and moral behavior and nourishing its instinctive needs.
- 3. Direct student attention to the first page of 2.4 and read aloud the example of an allegory on climate change. Use this time to explain the characteristics of an allegory and respond to any student questions.
- 4. Give students a few minutes to select their focus from the two options, and to begin listing the real-world influences that work to cultivate or corrupt the fitra. They should reflect on their own life experiences: "What are the external forces, positive or negative, and personal habits influencing your fitra?"
- 5. After a few minutes, continue on to the consolidation.





Consolidation (8 min)

Slide 12

- 1. Proceed to **slide 12** and direct students to "Part IV: Exit Ticket" on their handout (**2.3**). To conclude the lesson, students will now summarize what they learned about the *fitra* and reflect on its role as a heart-based proof for God's existence. Set the timer for 6-7 minutes while students complete the following tasks:
 - a. First, develop a definition of the *fitra* based on what you learned in class. Then, list its defining characteristics. Conclude your Frayer Model by sharing examples and non- examples of a life upon the *fitra*.
 - b. Second, reflect on and respond to the following question: "Reflect on the reality of the *fitra* and how it drives us (on a personal and collective level) to seek God, meaning, and moral excellence. How does the reality of *fitra* establish a heart-based rationale for God's existence? How do you feel about this line of evidence?"
- 2. Collect the exit tickets from students before concluding the lesson.

Homework

Pass out a copy of **2.4** "The Allegory of the Fitra" to each student.



The Allegory of Fitra

Cultivation or Corruption

Objective: You are going to create an allegory of the fitro in the form of a short story and an accompanying diorama to demonstrate your understanding of four things: what your fitro is, its primary inclinations, the negative or positive influences working for or against it, and the implications of corrupting or cultivating it.

Similar to parables and metaphors, an **allegory** is a visual story that uses objects and figures symbolically in order to convey a deeper message about spirituality, morality, robitics etc.



An allegory on the climate crisis, for example, may consist of a dangerous fragon lose in a language. Because hyeatock, sorched patches of land, and arge larad footparist all point to the dragon's recidess activity, and though the violence mounts and the passams plead, have dragon's recidess activity, and though the violence mounts and the passams plead, have all the passams plead with the passams plead the passams p

wise acknowledge evidence of the dragon's mischelf, in the same way that only scientists and environmental extrins sound the aim for ringing seal to wise and carbon clinical and an environmental extreme states sound the aim for ringing seal to wise and carbon clinical and consequently endangers the lives of many people inside and custicle his border, similar to the way many political leaders climits the effects of global climate change (e.g., prolonged troughts and natural disasters) or many third-world populations. The message of this cligopory is one the fundate critisk is undensible and our leadership must act quickly before

For a second example of an allegory, read about Plato's "Allegory of the Cave."

- First, select the focus of your allegory.
- Absence of God I The consequences of living a God-less life: corrupting the fitra through negative, external influences and immoral behavior and rejecting its instinctive needs
- fitra through positive, external influences and moral behavior and nourishing its instinctive needs

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Stage 3: Assessments

Performance tasks

Formative assessment 2.3

To formatively assess the first objective, have students complete the Frayer Model and reflection question on **2.3 "The Human Fitra"**. Students will use that space to define the *fitra*, elaborate on its core characteristics, and explain its role as a heart-based proof for God's existence. A rubric is provided at the end for student assessment.

The student activity on **slide eleven** will be used to formatively assess the second objective.

Summative assessment 2.4

See the homework assignment.



Instructions and activities

Lesson 1 Lesson 2

Lesson 3 • The rational proof of God



Essential Questions

What are the distinctive qualities between the two Qur'anic approaches to proving God's existence?

How are the mindbased approaches to God's existence based on rationality and experience?



Key vocabulary

Teleological argument

the argument for the existence of God from the evidence of order, and hence design, in nature

Fine-tuning

to make small adjustments for optimal performance or effectiveness

Kalam cosmological argument

a three-pronged argument (developed by Muslim theologians of the cosmological argument) that makes an inference from particular alleged facts about the universe (cosmos) to the existence of a unique being, generally identified with or referred to as God

Principle of causality

the philosophical principle that every change in the universe is produced by some cause

Lesson plan 3

The Rational Proof of God

Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

Lesson overview

In the final lesson plan of this unit, students will focus on two mind-based arguments for establishing God's reality: the teleological argument and the kalam cosmological argument. As it was explored in the previous lesson, although knowledge of God is an intuitive sense that all humans are predisposed with, the Qur'an presents another approach to recognizing God's reality by using one's intellect. A mind-based or "rational" way of proving God's existence is necessary in case the fitra is corrupted. This approach may also work in tandem with what the heart already knows in order to strengthen one's conviction. Through the mind-based approach, the Qur'an provokes its readers to not take God for granted, but to rationally imagine creation and its intricacies without a cause or creator. This reflection of the sensible world forces one to grapple with the illogical position that things come into existence without the need of an agent, not to mention something as complex as the universe. Students will come to appreciate that the world is discernible and, with greater knowledge of the world within all fields of scientific inquiry including biology and physics, one is only further pushed to accept that there must be a volitional and intelligent Creator.

To conclude, students will learn about the classical Islamic argument for God's existence, referred to in this unit as the "kalam cosmological argument". In short, this argument is composed of two premises that, if proven accurate, necessitate the truth of the concluding statement. Students will parse through these two premises in a way that will demonstrate their absolute certainty and allow them to necessarily conclude without a doubt that God most certainly exists.

Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

1 Appreciate creation and its inherent complexity as signs of God. (affective)

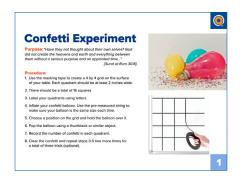
2 Understand the classical *kalam* cosmological argument and appreciate its argument's rationale from both experience and pure reason. *(cognitive and affective)*

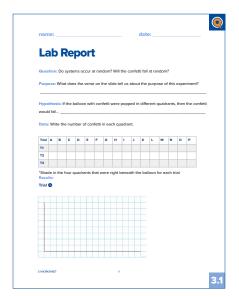


Key vocabulary

Principle of noncontradiction

the principle that contradictory opposites cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense





Teacher's note

The lab report is set up for three trials per group. The trials are so that the students can experiment positioning the balloon over different parts of the grid. If time does not permit, this method can be modified by distributing the three trials to the whole class and giving every two groups a specific position on the grid. If you choose to do it this way, then each group would receive one balloon and only complete one trial. The class can then collectively share their data and graph the results as a class. Provide the students with a premeasured string to ensure all the balloons are inflated to the same size.

Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 60 min

Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 3 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation and play videos
- Printouts of 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 for each student
- 6/18 latex confetti balloons
- Masking tape
- 6 pre-measured string the size of an inflated balloon
- 2 blank notecards/half-sheets of paper for each student
- 20-30 dominoes

Opening activity (10 min)

Slide 1

- Open slide 1. Display the confetti experiment and inform students that they will conduct a group experiment. To set up this activity, complete the following:
 - a. Divide the class into six groups. Hand each student a copy of 3.1 "Lab Report". Each group should also receive masking tape, one pre-measured string, a thumbtack, and three confetti balloons. Have students use the masking tape to create a 4x4 grid on their table (see slide for sample). They should have a total of sixteen squares.
 - b. Prior to beginning the experiment, tell students that they will research the following questions: Do systems occur at random? Will the confetti fall into the quadrants randomly or will a pattern be observed?
 - c. Have students fill out their **3.1 "Lab Report"** as a group and discuss their results. The purpose of the experiment is related to the verse displayed on the slide. The students are to draw a connection between the verse and the reasons behind the experiment. Instruct students to write down the number of confetti in each quadrant in the data section. They are to shade in the four quadrants that were directly underneath the balloon prior to popping it. At the completion of the experiment, students should arrive at the conclusion that the confetti does not fall randomly on the grid. They will see a burst of confetti in the quadrants directly underneath the area where they popped the balloon no matter where they positioned the balloon on the grid.

Teacher's note

In the previous lesson, we looked at a heart-based approach to establishing God's existence. In this section, students will explore a mind-based approach through verses that call us to ponder the signs in nature. We are called to engage in thoughtful reflection (tafakkur) upon all of these signs as a means of recognizing our purpose and attaining conviction. The case for God's existence in the Qur'an and Sunnah is straightforward, easy to comprehend, and supported by logic and sound reasoning. Special training or mastering a philosophy is not needed to arrive at the truth of theism; the evidence and arguments are accessible to all people regardless of their level of education. This is a manifestation of the wisdom and mercy of the Creator, who created the world so that He would be known, as a stepping-stone toward the greater life to come in the Hereafter. The spiritual path does require, however, a sustained and patient effort to seek out the truth, to answer the most important existential questions, and to remove specious doubts.





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Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this experiment is to provide students with a tangible way to interact with the concepts of teleology and fine-tuning covered in this section. They will notice that direction cannot be spontaneous and that everything has a discernible purpose and design. Both the positioning and the popping of the balloon were necessary causes in order to achieve the desired outcome. The great scholar Abu Hanifah similarly devised a thought experiment while debating with some philosophers of his time. When they questioned the existence of One Creator, he asked, "Can you imagine a ship on the Tigris River that moved and navigated by itself, filled itself with food, goods, and other materials, went back by itself, anchored itself, unloaded itself and continued to do all of this without anyone managing it?" They responded, "That could never happen." Abu Hanifah said, "If it is impossible for a ship, then how is it possible for the entire world in all of its vastness?" If neither balloons in our opening activity nor a ship in the Tigris River can possibly move without a discernible purpose and design, how can we imagine or think that the universe with all of its complexity came into being without a designer? In the next section, students will examine a number of Qur'anic verses that establish God's existence from the argument of purpose and design.

Learning activity (50 min) 🖍

Slides 2-3

- Proceed to slide 2 and display the first verse. Inform the class that they
 will now take a glance at what the Qur'an says regarding seeking out the
 truth and finding our purpose. Read the verse on slides two and three
 and highlight their importance using the following notes:
 - a. Allah asks us to reflect on the nature of our existence and the universe.
 - b. Allah tells us to look at ourselves as proof. What are some examples within our own selves that serve a greater purpose? Our eyes were made to see. Our ears were made to hear. Our lungs were made to breathe.
 - c. What do we notice when we observe the universe and all that it contains? The very fabric of the cosmos, from the macroscopic stars to the microscopic world of microbes and everything in between, contains a set of universal, natural laws that produce order. Encourage students to share examples of order in the universe.
- 2. Continue to **slide 3** and read the verses and translation aloud. There are similarities between these verses and the previous one. Give students a chance to point them out.
 - a. Prompt students to reflect on the meaning of the verses. Give students two minutes to jot down their thoughts to the following questions:
 - i. Have you ever had a moment where you reflected on the purpose of your existence or whether or not anything can exist without an intent or purpose? What evoked those thoughts?
 - ii. Why was the universe in all of its intricacy created?
 - b. Invite students to share their answers with the class.



Teacher takeaway

The Qur'an addresses this question with a cosmological discourse, a reminder that it was God who created everything and caused it to be, as the only logical explanation for the universe. Human beings are asked to reflect upon the nature of their existence and the universe. Is it really plausible, sensible, and intuitive that the universe appeared arbitrarily for no reason? Or that anything can come into existence from a complete vacuum?

Slide 4

- 1. Proceed to **slide 4** and play the video clip.
- 2. Turn & Talk: After the video, encourage students to turn and discuss the following questions with a partner:
 - a. What fascinated you most about the video?
 - b. What are some ways we silence our fitra and distract ourselves from questioning our purpose?

Slide 5

- 1. Proceed to **slide 5** and introduce the students to the teleological argument. Read the text on the slide and elaborate with the following notes:
 - a. The term teleological comes from the Greek words telos and logos. Telos means the "goal", "end", or "purpose of a thing", while logos means "the study of the very nature of a thing."
 - b. The Qur'an encourages us to ponder this very question and to examine the world around us.
 - c. When we look closely, we notice that the universe contains order, coherency, design, and complexity.
 - d. How do we know there is this fine tuning and intentionality in this universe? Let's take a look at some examples.

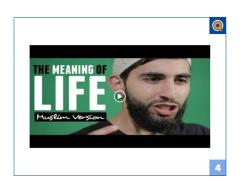
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Teacher takeaway

In this section, students learn about one of three mind-based rationales for God's existence, namely the teleological argument, based on the Qur'an and their personal experience. The teleological argument is also known as the argument from design. It has been used by philosophers and various faiths to argue for the existence of God. "Telos" is the Greek word for "goal" or "purpose." With so many clear instances of purpose that we repeatedly experience in the different parts of the universe, it is only logical to conclude that there must be a designer that instilled this purpose, God. In the next section, students will learn about the cosmological forces whose numerical precision effectuated the universe's expansion and life on earth.

Slide 6

Proceed to **slide 6**. Play the video clip to introduce examples of fine-tuning in the universe.



The Teleological Argument

The Teleological argument argues that the universe is being directed towards a telos, an end purpose. The evidence of an apparent intelligent design in the world implies the existence of an intelligent designer, God.

The fine-tuning in the universe is due to necessity. Every creation was created for a purpose. For a seed, it might be an adult plant; for a sailboat, it might be sailing; for a ball at the top of a ramp, it might be coming to rest at the bottom.

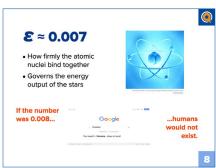
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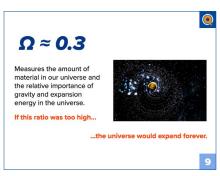


This video introduces students to the term "fine-tuning" through examples that exist in our universe. It is important to note that in this video and the slides that follow, the constants provided are only a reflection of what we currently know. We presume that there are others that we will be able to measure as our technologies and tools to calculate such numbers improve.

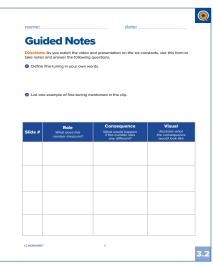












Slides 7-10

1. Proceed to slide 7. Pass out 3.2 "Guided Notes" and instruct students to take notes as you go through the next four slides. Inform students that they will now expand on some of the numbers mentioned in the video. These constants play a crucial role in the expansion of the universe.

 $N \approx 1036$: N is the square ratio of the electrostatic and the gravitational forces between two protons. N governs the relative importance of gravity and electrostatic attraction/repulsion in explaining the properties of matter. If it had any less zeros, only a miniature earth would exist and no creature would grow larger than an insect.

2. Continue to **slide 8** to display the next number.

 $\epsilon \approx 0.007$: E measures how firmly the atomic nuclei bind together and governs the energy output of stars. The value of epsilon controls the power from the sun and, more sensitively, how stars transmute hydrogen into all the atoms of the periodic table. Carbon and oxygen are common, and gold and uranium are rare, because of what happens in the stars. If epsilon were 0.006 or 0.008, human life would be impossible.

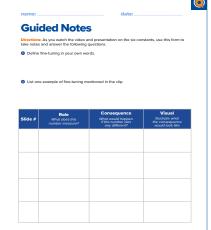
3. Transition to slide 9.

 $\Omega \approx 0.3$: Omega represents the ratio of the actual density of the universe to the critical (minimum) density required for the universe to eventually collapse under its gravity. Ω determines the ultimate fate of the universe. If $\Omega \ge 1$, the universe will experience a Big Crunch. If $\Omega < 1$, the universe will expand forever.

4. End this section with slide 10.

 $\lambda \approx 0.7$: Lambda stands for a very small anti-gravity that controls the expansion of the universe. Fortunately for us, this number is very small. Had it been any larger, it would have stopped galaxies and stars from forming. It would have also stifled evolution before it even began.

- 5. Play the video [min. 2:10-5:33] to show students what would happen if we were to lose gravity for just five seconds.
 - Give students a few minutes to complete handout (3.2).
- 6. Collect handout (3.2) from students as a formative assessment for the first objective.



Teacher takeaway

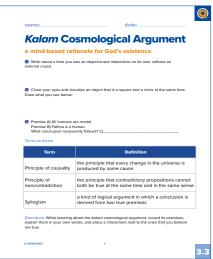
Above are four of the six numbers found in Just Six Numbers by Martin Rees. Tracing the explanations for why things are as they are leads to the reasonable conclusion that the universe is designed for life. Scientists have referred to this as the finely-tuned universe or the anthropic principle, meaning that the laws of nature are configured in such astonishingly precise measurements in order for the universe to exist and for life to thrive. According to physicist and philosopher Robin Collins, "If the initial explosion of the big bang had differed in strength as little as one part in 1060, the universe would have either quickly collapsed back on itself or expanded too rapidly for stars to form." In either case, life would be altered or even threatened. Each of these forces and phenomena is balanced in a way that produces the wondrous universe in which we live. It is hardly rational or logical to assume—without hard evidence—that all of these natural laws, with every miracle that they produce, appeared without cause or purpose. Hence most physicists would not deem it a dimensionless physical constant of the sort discussed in this entry. Emphasize to students that the primary reason for studying these fine-tuned numbers is that they point to an intelligent designer existing outside of creation. How can this fine-tuning occur by chance?

Teacher's note

Set up the following activity by passing out two notecards or two half-sheets of paper to each student. On the first notecard or half-sheet of paper, students will write the letter "A" in large, bold print. On the second notecard or half-sheet of paper, they will write the letter "B" in large, bold print.







Slides 11-12 🖋

- Proceed to slide 11 and read aloud the following scenario: "Imagine that you walk out of your garage one morning and find a brand-new Tesla sitting on your driveway. What do you conclude? A) Someone built and brought that car to your driveway. B) The car simply built itself over your driveway."
- 2. Instruct students to hold up the letter (A or B) that reflects their answer to the question.
- 3. Once the class is ready, call on various students to explain the rationale behind their conclusion. Students will most likely hold up the letter A, "Someone built and brought the car to your driveway." During the class discussion, prompt students to consider the principles of causality and noncontradiction using the following line of questioning:
 - a. Why would you conclude that someone built and brought that car to your driveway if you didn't witness that happening firsthand? How can you be so sure that it didn't materialize on its own?
 - b. Is it physically possible that the car built itself? In other words, can a car exist and not exist at the same time?
- 4. Transition to slide 12 at the conclusion of the discussion, and then pass out copies of 3.3 "Kalam Cosmological Argument" to students. Explain that, through reason and from experience, we can establish the following principles:
 - a. The principle of causality: every change in the universe is produced by some cause.

In the "Imagine that..." scenario, we would conclude that someone brought that Tesla to your driveway. This is because we know, through reason and from experience, that things do not appear randomly without another object to move it or a process to cause it. If a bird appeared in your house, for example, you would naturally conclude that it came in from a screen-less window or a door accidentally left open. It would be absurd to conclude that it materialized into existence without a cause.

If students want to challenge this principle, ask them to write about a time they saw an object or an event materialize on its own, without an external cause (3.3).

b. The principle of noncontradiction: contradictory propositions (e.g., "an object is a square and a circle") cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense.

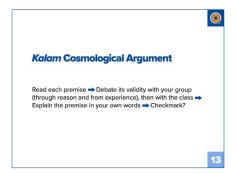
In the "Imagine that..." scenario, we would conclude that someone built that Tesla; it didn't build itself while it was simultaneously non-existent. This is because we know, through reason and from experience, that something cannot exist and not exist from the same perspective. If a bird appeared in your house, for example, you wouldn't conclude that it gave birth to itself, existing and not existing simultaneously. Believing so is irrational and contradictory.

If students want to challenge this principle, ask them to close their eyes and visualize an object that is a square and a circle at the same time, and to draw what they see on **3.3**. They will discover that a "squircle" is neither a square nor a circle because it doesn't meet the requirements of either shape: it lacks the four sides of equal length and the four 90- degree angles necessarily characteristic of a square. And the points along the shape aren't equal distance from the center of the "squircle", thus disqualifying it from being a circle.

- 5. Tell students to keep these two principles in mind as they learn about a syllogism for God's existence.
 - a. Define "syllogism" as a kind of logical argument in which a conclusion is necessarily derived from two true premises.
 - b. To demonstrate the workings of a syllogism, give students the following example and ask them to determine the conclusion:
 "Premise A states that all humans are mortal. Premise B states that Fatima is a human. What conclusion necessarily follows?" They should record their answer—i.e., "Fatima is mortal"—on 3.3.
 - c. Explain to students that the strength of a syllogism depends on the validity of its first two premises. If we can disprove the first premise that "all humans are mortal," or the second premise that "Fatima is a human," the syllogism falls apart and the conclusion that Fatima, a human, is mortal becomes invalid.

🖍 Teacher's note

The following section is a teacher-led exploration of the *kalam* cosmological argument. To set up the activity, ask students to gather their handouts (3.3), A and B letter cards, and writing utensils, and to sit in groups of three. You will present each premise of the syllogism, whereupon students will spend two minutes discussing with their groups whether or not they believe that premise and why. Following their short discussion, students will hold up the letter that represents their stance (A for "agree" and B for "disagree"). Then, invite students from both camps to express their thoughts on the strength of each premise.



Teacher's note

As you move through the *kalam* cosmological argument, be sure to provide your students the time, space, and autonomy to determine whether or not they believe in each premise. Encourage them to debate one another, to apply their reason, and to share their experiences before they place a checkmark next to a premise.

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Teacher takeaway

This section provides students with the foundational knowledge necessary to appreciate the premises of the *kalam* cosmological argument. Developed by eleventh-century scholar Imam al-Ghazali, this iteration of the argument is a three-pronged syllogism whereupon the truth of the first and second premises necessarily concludes that the universe, a temporally finite 'thing,' was brought to existence from an uncaused cause, or God. Students must understand and believe in the principles of causality and noncontradiction in order to accept the argument's conclusion. As for the principle of causality, we know from rational intuition and experience that something (in this case, the universe) cannot come into being from nothing and out of a state of nothingness. Otherwise, we would all have experienced things popping into existence without a preceding cause. Nor do things exist and not exist simultaneously, as established by the principle of noncontradiction.

Slides 13-17 🌶

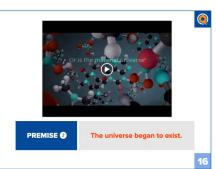
- 1. Proceed to **slide 13**. Inform students that one of the mind-based rationales for God's existence is called the "*Kalam* cosmological argument," a three-pronged syllogism in which the conclusion of God's existence is derived from two foundational premises. In other words, the logical argument that God exists hinges upon two propositions asserted as established truths.
- 2. Tell students that they must determine on their own whether or not they believe the first two premises of the syllogism. If a premise makes sense through reason and from experience, then they will place a checkmark next to it and summarize it in their own words. If a premise doesn't make sense, then they should challenge it before the class, arguing for its opposite through reason and from experience.



Teacher's note

The second premise of the kalam cosmological argument asserts that the universe is temporally finite and began to exist. Rejecting its finitude leaves us with a metaphysical quandary in which the universe always existed in an infinite temporal regress of causes and without a singular beginning. To illustrate the metaphysical impossibility of an infinite universe, prepare the following visual: on a hard surface, such as a table or a desk, arrange a big handful of dominoes in a long line so that the final domino is standing on one edge of the table. The line of dominoes regressing infinitely represents the sequence of causes preceding this exact moment in time.





Premise 1

- Continue to slide 14 and read aloud the first premise of the Kalam
 cosmological argument, "Everything in the universe that has a beginning
 must have a cause."
 - a. Give students two minutes to discuss this premise with their individual groups. Explain that the only alternative is that things appear randomly and without a cause preceding it.
 - b. Once time is up, invite students to hold up the letter card that represents their stance (A for "agree" and B for "disagree"). Call on various students to express their thoughts, especially those who want to challenge the premise.
 - c. Conclude the discussion by explaining that the principle of causality and noncontradiction undergird this first premise. No one believes that something can pop out of nothing or come into existence without a cause, and that logic applies to the physical universe as well.

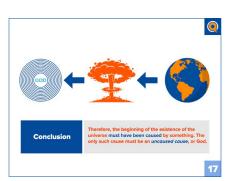
Premise 2 🥖

- 4. Transition to **slide 15** and pose the following question: "Imagine that this front domino above the tub of water represents this moment right now. If behind it is an infinite number of dominoes stretching back without a beginning, will this front domino ever fall down? Yes or no?" Students may express their answer by holding up the letter A for "yes" or the letter B for "no."
- 5. Call on some students to explain the reasoning behind their stance. Then, click on the embedded video to further illustrate the metaphysical impossibility of an infinite universe.
- Continue to slide 16 and read aloud the second premise, "The universe began to exist."
 - a. Give students two minutes to discuss this premise with their individual groups. Explain that the alternative to this premise is that the universe has no temporal beginning (i.e., no moment of origin that is postulated by the Big Bang theory); rather the universe regresses infinitely into the past and has no beginning.
 - b. Once time is up, invite students to hold up the letter card that represents their stance (A for "agree" and B for "disagree"). Call on various students to express their thoughts, especially those who want to challenge the premise.
 - c. Conclude the discussion by explaining that the universe's finitude is established by a collection of scientific theories and discoveries. Most notable of these is the Big Bang Theory, which postulates that, 13.7 billion years ago, our universe emerged from a singularity--a point of immense density, gravity, and heat from which the universe began to form and expand. Play the embedded video to provide students with more information on the modern scientific theories and discoveries that undergird the universe's finitude.

7. Direct students to the table on their handout (3.3). Instruct them to summarize the first two premises of the *Kalam* cosmological argument in their own words and to place a checkmark next to the premises which they believe to be true. Next, pose the question, "If the first two premises are true, then what conclusion necessarily follows?" Give students a few minutes to complete these tasks and then call on some students to share their take on the conclusion.

Premise 3 [Conclusion]

- 8. Continue to **slide 17** and read aloud the conclusion, "Therefore, the beginning of the existence of the universe must be caused by something. The only such cause must be an uncaused cause, or God."
 - a. Give students two minutes to discuss this concluding premise within their individual groups. Explain that if they are certain of the first and second premises, then the truth of the conclusion necessarily follows: the universe must be caused by something that exists outside of it, an uncaused cause with volitional willpower—or God. Given that He brought the entirety of the universe into existence, God is beginning-less, timeless, spaceless, immaterial, and enormously powerful.
 - b. Direct student attention to the line of dominoes. Tell students that the *Kalam* cosmological argument points to God as the first "cause"; from His volitional action to create, the universe began to exist.
 - c. Once time is up, invite students to express their thoughts regarding the concluding premise. You may also use this time to address any questions or misunderstandings students have about the entire *kalam* cosmological argument.



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Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this section is to present the Kalam cosmological argument as one of the most compelling mind-based rationales for God's existence. The argument is undergirded by our a priori knowledge of causality—our rational and experiential knowledge that something cannot come into being from nothing; rather, it requires an external cause (since it cannot bring itself into being, as known through the principle of noncontradiction). The argument's second underpinning idea is that the universe is temporally finite, brought into being by a first cause. Though Islamic in its origin, the Kalam cosmological argument (KCA) has been popularized by Western philosophers and theologians for centuries, namely Christian philosopher William Lane Craig. He wrote the following summary of the argument: "...transcending the entire universe there exists a cause which brought the universe into being ex nihilo, from nothingness [...] our whole universe was caused to exist by something beyond it and greater than it. For it is no secret that one of the most important conceptions of what theists mean by 'God' is Creator of heaven and earth." While it is possible to reach knowledge of these premises and conclusion without recourse to revelation, interestingly, we find an argument similar to the KCA in the Qur'an. The Qur'an, as we established in the first lesson, is holistic in its message; it considers the multidimensional nature of humankind by interweaving heart-based and mind-based rationales for establishing and affirming the existence of God. It contains its own iteration of the Kalam cosmological argument in two succinct verses, as students will see in the following section.

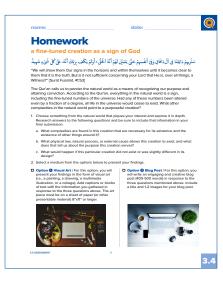
It is also important to note that despite the significant political differences among early Muslims, Muslims far and wide have always unanimously accepted the text of the Qur'an as it is today.





Slide 18

- 1. Proceed to **slide 18**. Tell students that the Qur'an provides a powerful, mind-based rationale for God's existence in two succinct verses (Surat at-Tur, 52:34-35). Recite these two verses loud: "Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain."
- 2. Then, ask students to answer the following questions with an elbow partner: "What four possibilities for the universe's existence does the Qur'an present? And how do they correlate with the *Kalam* cosmological argument?" They may record their thoughts on page two of **3.3** and make corrections, if necessary, after you provide the answer.
- 3. After a few minutes, call on some students to list the four possibilities and to find their correlation with the *Kalam* cosmological argument. The following notes are provided as an answer key:
 - a. Created by nothing (إَمْ خُلِقُواْ مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ): this implies that the universe materialized into existence and without an external cause. This possibility violates the principle of causality.
 - b. Self-created (اَّامُ هُمُ ٱلْخُلِقُونَ): this implies that the universe brought itself into existence while being non-existent at the same time. This possibility violates the principle of noncontradiction.
 - c. Created by something created this implies that the universe (اللَّهُ خَلَقُواْ ٱلسَّمَوَتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ): exists without a beginning, in a causal chain that regresses infinitely into the past. In other words, the universe would go on forever without it ever completing. If there were an infinite number of moments before this moment, we would, in actuality, never arrive at this moment in time.
 - d. Created by something uncreated, i.e., God this implies that the denial of (بَل لَا يُوقِنُونَ): God is baseless and the only plausible explanation to the universe's beginning is an uncreated Creator, i.e., God.
- 4. Explain the following to the class:
 - a. Although the Qur'anic argument refers to the human being, it can also be applied to anything that began to exist, like the universe. The term used is khuliqu, which means "created," "made," or "originated" to encompass anything and everything that came into being.
 - b. The Qur'anic argument for God's existence can be understood without necessarily referencing scripture. Essentially, it is arguing the following: the universe is finite. A finite thing could not have come from nothing; it could not have created itself or caused itself to exist; nor could it have come from an infinite sequence of created things. Only the final possibility is plausible: the universe was created by something uncreated, i.e., God.
- 5. At the end of the discussion, collect the handout (**3.3**) from students as a formative assessment for the second objective.



Consolidation (5 min)

1. To conclude the lesson, pass out copies of **3.4 "Homework"** to students and review the instructions before dismissal.

Homework

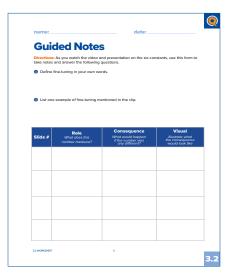
Pass out a copy of **3.4 "Homework"** to each student. In this assignment, students will continue learning about the universe's fine-tuning and the external causes that bring things into existence. Selecting between a visual art piece or a written blog post, students will focus on something in the natural world that piques their interest. They will then research and present the answers to the following questions:

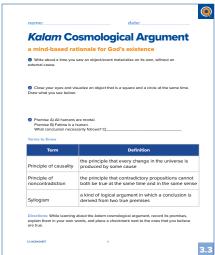
- 1. What complexities are found in this creation that are necessary for its existence and the existence of other things around it?
- 2. What physical law, natural process, or external cause allows this creation to exist, and what does that tell us about the purpose this creation serves?
- 3. What would happen if this particular creation did not exist or was slightly different in its design?



Teacher takeaway

The purpose of this section is to acquaint students with the Qur'anic basis of the Kalam cosmological argument. In just two verses, the Qur'an argues God's existence from Reductio ad Absurdum; in other words, it presents four possibilities for how the universe began and then refutes three of them as absurd or incomprehensible if followed to their logical conclusions. The first possibility is that the universe materialized from nothing, without an external cause to bring it to existence. Such a proposition defies our rational and experiential understanding of causality, the principle that every change in the universe is produced by some cause. The second possibility is that the universe created itself. But to have brought itself into existence means that, at one point in time, the universe existed and didn't exist simultaneously. Existing and not existing are two contradictory propositions and cannot be true at the same time and in the same sense. The third possibility is that the universe was created by another created thing. Believing this would lead to an infinite regress of causes; we would have to ask ad infinitum, "and who created that created thing that caused the universe?" The final possibility is that the universe came into existence from something uncreated, powerful, immaterial, and existing outside of time and space. In other words, God began the creation of the universe.







Stage 3: Assessments

Performance tasks

Formative assessments 3.2, 3.3

- To formatively assess the first objective, have students fill out the
 connection on the bottom of 3.2 "Guided Notes". After they have
 completed the confetti experiment, explored what the Qur'an says about
 seeking our purpose, and witnessed examples of fine-tuning in the
 universe, the students should be able to draw the connection between
 them and demonstrate an understanding of the teleological argument.
- 2. Use the checklist and table on 3.3 "Kalam Cosmological Argument" to informally assess students on the second objective. To demonstrate their understanding of the Kalam cosmological argument, students will summarize each of its premises in their own words and determine whether or not they agree with each premise. You may also use the class discussion to gauge how well students apply their sense of reason and draw on their personal experiences when discussing the KCA's premises.

Summative assessment 3.4

See 3.4 "Homework" above.



References

References and resources

Quranic references

Lesson plan 1

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُواْ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ ءَاذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى ٱلْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى ٱلْقَبُوبُ اللَّهُمُ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ ءَاذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى ٱلْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى ٱلْقُلُوبُ اللَّهُ وَلِي الْقُلُوبُ الَّقِي فِي ٱلصَّدُورِ

"So have they not traveled through the earth, and have they not hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the chests." [Surat al-Hajj, 22:46]

أَفَتُؤُمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ ٱلْكِتَابِ وَتَكُفُرُونَ بِبَعْضِ

"So do you believe in part of the book and deny the other part?" [Surat al-Bagarah, 2:85]

"Certainly, God is the cleaver of the grain and fruit seeds. He brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living. That is God. So how can you turn away from the truth?" [Surat al-An'am, 6:95]

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمًا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُواْ بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ - وَآدْعُواْ شُهَدَآءَكُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَلدِقِينَ

"And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful." [Surat al-Bagarah, 2:23]

"Those who have faith and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of God—truly it is in the remembrance of God that the hearts find peace." [Surat ar-Ra'd, 13:28]

"Say [Prophet Muhammad], 'Who is it that saves you from the dark depths of land and sea when you humbly and secretly call to Him [and say], "If He rescues us from this, we should truly be thankful"? Say, 'God rescues you from this and every distress; yet you still worship [and turn to] others besides him." [Surat al-An'am, 6:63–64]

أَمْ خُلِقُواْ مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ ٱلْخَلِقُونَ أَمْ خَلَقُواْ ٱلسَّمَاوَتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ ۚ بَل لَّا يُوقِنُونَ أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ أَمْ هُمُ ٱلْمُصَيْطِرُونَ أَمْ لَهُمْ سُلَّمُ يَسْتَمِعُونَ فِيهِ ۖ فَلْيَأْتِ مُسْتَمِّعُهُم بِسُلْطَنِ مَّبِينٍ

"Were they created out of nothing? Were they the creators? Did they create the heavens and the earth? No, they do not have faith. Do they possess your Lord's treasures or have control over them? Do they have a ladder to climb, in order to eavesdrop (on the Heaven's secrets)." [Surat at-Tur, 52: 35–38]

"Have they not thought about their own selves? God did not create the heavens and earth and everything between them without a serious purpose and an appointed time, yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord." [Surat ar-Rum, 30:8]

"And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you [the senses of] hearing, vision, and perceptive hearts that perhaps you would be grateful." [Surat an-Nahl, 16:78]

Lesson plan 2

وَإِذَا مَشَ ٱلْإِنسَانَ ٱلضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنَّبِهِ ۗ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَآئِمًا

"And when humankind is touched with hardship, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side, or sitting, or standing..." [Surat Yunus, 10:12]

So turn your face toward the true, natural way of life, as a seeker of truth—God's chosen *fitra* (primordial disposition) upon which He has formed humanity. There is no substituting the primary state of God's creation. That is the correct way of life, though most people fail to realize it. [Surat ar-Rum, 30:30]

And remember when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and had them testify regarding themselves. [Allah asked] "Am I not your Lord?" They replied, "Yes, You are, we testify." [He cautioned] "Now you have no right to say on Judgment Day, 'We were not aware of this." [7:172]

Lesson plan 3

Have they not thought about their own selves? God did not create the heavens and earth and everything between them without a serious purpose and an appointed time, yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord. [Surat ar-Rum, 30:8]

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. [Surat Ali 'Imran; 3:190]

Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire. [Surat Ali 'Imran; 3:191]

أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِن غَيرِ شَىءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الخُلِقُونُ أَمْ خَلَقُوا الشَّمُوٰتِ وَالأَرضَ بَلُ لَا يُوقِنُونَ

Or were they created by nothing?
Or were they the creators [of themselves]?
Or did they create the heavens and the earth?
Rather, they are not certain.
[Surat at-Tur, 52:35–36]

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" [Surat Fussilat, 41:53]

Hadith resources

Lesson plan 2

Prophet Muhammad said, "No child is born except upon the fitra, though his parents [may] raise him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magaian, etc., just as an animal is born whole—do you see any part of its body amputated or deformed?" [Bukhari & Muslim]

Textual resources

Lesson plan 2

Fitrah: The Primordial Nature of Man

What Islam Offers to Modern Self-Help: An Islamic Paradigm of Psychology

The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought: [Muhammad Iqbal; pp. 15–16]

Multimedia resources

Lesson plan 1

Plant Growth Timelapse: Signs of God?

Crash Course: Scientific Revolution

The Awkward Yeti: Heart & Brain Comic

Lesson plan 2

Charity Water Story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdBG5VO01e0&-feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=charitywater

Gifted with Cancer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzL6BLPAFBo&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=OnePathNetwork

Buddhist Monks: https://www.flickr.com/photos/36751871@ N00/8033349164

Buddhist Monks (2): https://www.flickr.com/photos/10504927@ N08/3518635593

Western Wall: https://www.flickr.com/photos/20792787@N00/2720247112

Praying at the Wall: https://www.flickr.com/photos/94588149@N00/5318705227

Hindu Worship: https://www.flickr.com/photos/129651693@ N07/16725187255

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Shinto Worship: https://www.flickr.com/photos/21186555@ N07/49144943583

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Roman Catholics: https://www.flickr.com/photos/35409814@N00

Stairway to Heaven: https://www.flickr.com/photos/46783079@N00/46126386285

Ancient Egyptians: https://www.flickr.com/photos/96884693@N00/23816882835

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Ancient Greek Gods: <a href="https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/ancient-greek-gods-2-horizontal-cartoon-figures-sets-with-dionysus-zeus-poseidon-aphrodite-apollo-athena_6845839.htm#page=1&query=ancient%20greek%20gods&position=0

Ancient Persepolis: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/1.0/deed.en

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Muslims Praying: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons

Taraweeh Prayer: https://www.flickr.com/photos/53285566@N00

Lungshan Temple: https://www.flickr.com/photos/19348052@N00/3601924968

Secular People: https://www.flickr.com/photos/83905817@N08/7676623576/

Lesson plan 3

Meaning of Life: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d16CpWp-ok&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=TalkIslam

Fine-Tuning the Universe: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE76nwi-muT0&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=drcraigvideos

What If We Lost Gravity?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt6LfTtP-PGU&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=WhatIf

Miniature Universe: https://images.pexels.com/photos/1275393/ https://images.pexels.com/photos/1275393/ https://images.pexels.com/photos/1275393/ https://images.pexels.com/photos/1275393.jpeg?auto=compress&cs=tinysrgb&d-pr=2&h=750&w=1260

Atomic Bond: https://live.staticflickr.com/7205/6944232135_722f80977d.jpg

Google Search: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c1/Google_Homepage.svg/1200px-Google_Homepage.svg.png

Expanding Universe: https://images.unsplash.com/
https://images.unsplash.com/
https://images.unsplash.com/
https://images.unsplash.com/

Cosmological Argument: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tgisehu-GOyY&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=CrashCourse

Cosmological Argument (2): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CulBuM-CLg0&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=drcraigvideos

Blog Post: https://www.pexels.com/photo/assorted-color-artwork-equip-ment-set-1053687/

Blog Post (2): https://www.pexels.com/photo/photography-of-laptop-com-puter-camera-smartphone-headphones-and-mug-705164/