TEXT YOUR QUESTIONS TO: 833-265-5246

Faith & Reason Group Discussion Questions – October 16, 2026
"ORIGINS" SERIES: HUMANS AND MIND

Origin of HUMANS: summary of confidence zones

- *High evidential support:*
  - The human line split from chimpanzees roughly **6 to 8 million years ago**
  - Homo sapiens first appeared in Africa no later than **~300,000 years ago** (oldest fossils in Morocco)
  - The principle migration of humans out of Africa was **60,000-70,000 years ago**
  - **Existence** of "Mitochondrial Eve" and "Y-Chromosomal Adam" populations
- *Reasonable best explanation:*
  - **LUCA existed** (a common ancestor of all modern life, including humans)
  - **The exact timeline** of "Mitochondrial Eve" (i.e., 100-200k years ago) and "Y-Chromosomal Adam" (200k-300k years ago)
- *Speculation / uncloseable gaps:*
  - Whether **imagination**, "**mental time travel**," **self-awareness** (or awareness of self-awareness) are unique to humans and/or just matters of degree (compared with other animals)
  - Theoretical explanations of HOW **language**, **imagination**, and **symbolic thought** emerged (independently of THAT they did … they leave no direct fossil or genetic evidence)

Discussion prompts: choose any or all

- Describe your **personal journey** with the topic of the **origin of humans (or mind)**.
- Describe a time when you **significantly changed your mind** with respect to this topic.
- Describe your **biggest question/uncertainty/insecurity** with respect to this topic.

Origin of MIND: summary of confidence zones

- *High evidential support:*
  - Encoding of both movement execution and movement intention is a result of **activation of distinct neural pathways**
  - Higher mental/emotional states have **unique cortical representations** across brain regions as a neural network
  - Neuronal networks are plastic and **dynamically reorganize in response to stimuli** … they can be strategically shaped by modifying sense experience
- *Reasonable best explanation:*
  - The assessment and detection of consciousness may be **inferred** from pattern analyses of neural activity
  - "Mind" as we conceive encompasses functions that include: **consciousness, cognition, language, perception, emotion, memory, sleep** – all of which have unique neural substrates and signatures
- *Speculation / uncloseable gaps:*
  - **Any theory** of mind-body connection: (e.g., mind as an emergent function, epiphenomenon of brain processes, a product of neuronal activity)
  - **Casual closure**: the physical domain is closed to non-physical processes (i.e., assertions that the mind can or cannot affect mental or physical changes)
  - The mind **being fully predictable** from (or reducible to) brain processes