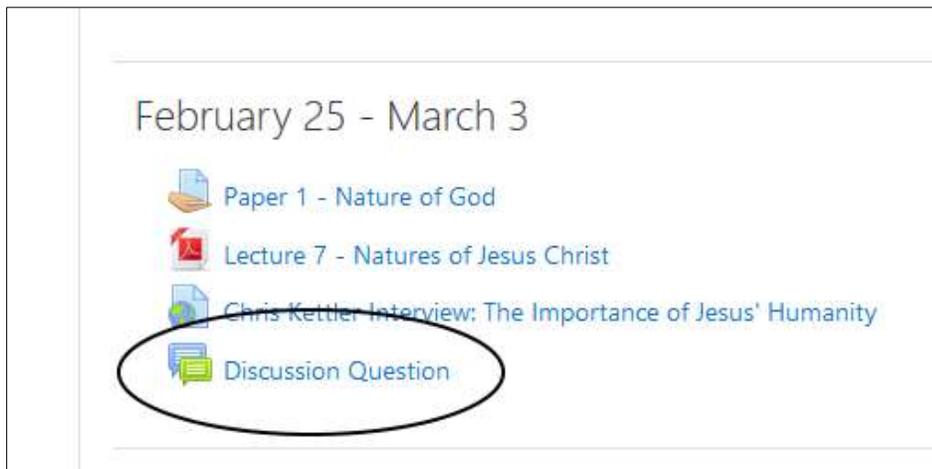
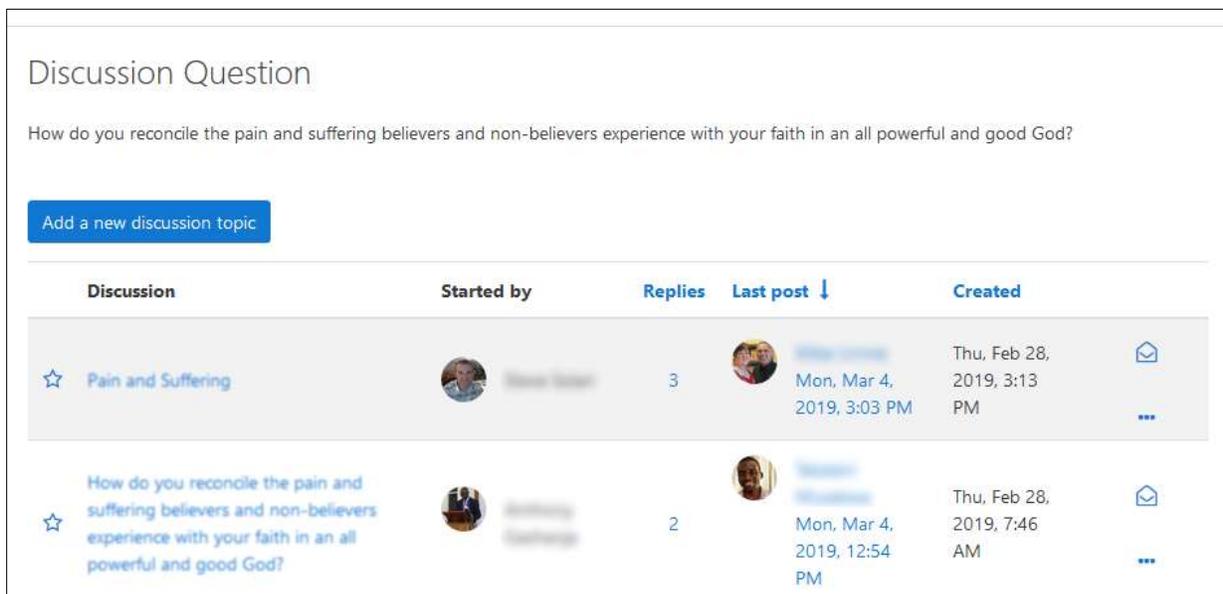


Forum: how to post new comments

Most GCS courses have forums in which students respond to questions given by the instructor, and in which the students interact with one another. Some forums are more complicated than others; we'll show details for the most complicated. This involves several steps, so this section is a little long. We'll give a picture of the screen at each step, starting with the main page for the course.



In the image above, the entry for the forum is circled - with a blue-green icon depicting two balloon comments. After you click on the name of the forum, you may see a page like the one below:



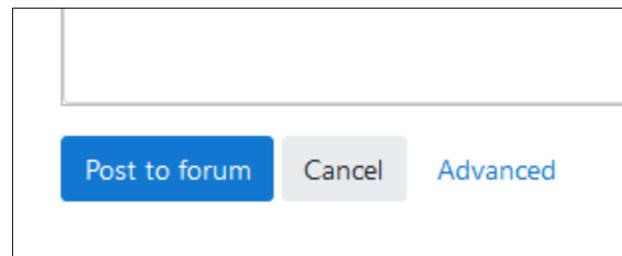
- In some cases, you will see only an initial question, and a link for “reply.” In such cases, the instructor has set the forum up so that everyone discusses the same topic, and you cannot add new topics. All you can do is to click on “reply.” But if you see a page like shown above, you can add new topics, or at least provide your own title, and you can follow the instructions below.
- At the top you can see the initial question, given by the instructor. Below that, in the left column, under the word “Discussion,” you may see a number of topics that have been added by other students, as shown above (sections have been blurred to protect student privacy).
- In the center you can see which student (with a picture, if it’s available) started the discussion on that topic (also called a “thread”).
- In the next column you will see how many responses have been given to the topic.
- In the right-most column you can see who made the most recent comment in that topic and when it was.
- If you click on a student’s name, you can send a private message to that person. We’ll show you how to do that a little later.
- For now, we want to start something new, so we will click on the blue rectangle at the top: “Add a new discussion topic.” After you click, you will see:

The screenshot shows a web interface for a discussion forum. At the top, it says "Discussion Question" followed by the question: "How do you reconcile the pain and suffering believers and non-believers experience with your faith in an all powerful and good God?". Below this is a blue button labeled "Add a new discussion topic". To the left of the form are labels for "Subject:" and "Message:". The "Subject:" field is a simple text input box. The "Message:" field is a rich text editor with a toolbar containing icons for undo, bold, italic, list, link, unlink, link color, unlink color, link text, unlink text, link target, and unlink target. At the bottom of the form are three buttons: "Post to forum" (highlighted in blue), "Cancel", and "Advanced". A red error icon and text at the bottom left state: "There are required fields in this form marked [red icon]".

- You must describe what your comment is – type a title in the box to the

- right of the word “Subject.”
- Then type your comment into the box labelled “Message.”
 - You can use the gray icons for boldfacing, italicizing, underlining, etc. (You can also use keyboard shortcuts: Ctrl-b, Ctrl-i, Ctrl-u). For more formatting options, click the arrow icon in the upper left.
 - If you want to type your comments in Word first (in order to check grammar and spelling, for example), you can do that.
 - In Word, highlight what you want to copy. Press Ctrl-a if you want to highlight everything in your document.
 - Press Ctrl-c to copy.
 - Come back to your browser.
 - Click in the message box and press Ctrl-v to paste.
 - You can put pictures in your comments, though this is rarely done. Click on the icon in the top row that depicts a mountain and sun. After clicking on “Browse repositories,” you can upload a picture here in the same way that you uploaded one for your profile page.
 - You will generally be subscribed to the discussion. That is, you’ll get an email whenever anyone else makes a comment there.
 - When you are in a forum, in the left column is a box named “Administration”; there is a link there, either to subscribe or to unsubscribe. We recommend that you subscribe.
 - If you prefer only one message per day, click on your name in the upper right corner, then click “Preferences.” Then click “Forum preferences.” You can choose between a daily “digest” that has the full text of the comments, or an email that has only the subjects.
 - If you want to attach a document, click on “Advanced” underneath the box for the message. A box for attachment will then appear. Click on the “Add…” icon in the upper left (looks like a sheet of paper with one corner folded). The instructions are similar to uploading an assignment, which we will cover shortly. You may need to do this if you are uploading an assignment for other students to read and comment on. Otherwise, it is best to avoid attached documents, because they require additional steps in order for other students to read them.

- The most important part of the page is the button at the bottom: “Post to forum.” If you click on it and nothing happens, perhaps you have forgotten to type in a subject, which is a required field.
- You have 30 minutes to go back and edit your comment; the message will then be emailed to everyone who is subscribed.



A screenshot of a forum post submission form. It features a large, empty text input field at the top. Below the input field, there are three buttons: a blue button labeled "Post to forum", a grey button labeled "Cancel", and a blue link labeled "Advanced".