

The Grad Experience

Week 4



Is it Even Possible to Love Both Faith & Science?

Key Lesson: Many good scientists have concluded from their observations that an intelligent God must have chosen to create the universe with such beautiful, simple, and life-giving properties. Many other equally good scientists are nevertheless atheists. Both conclusions are positions of faith." - Rebecca McLaughlin

Welcome to Week 4 of the Grad Experience. **Each week as we look at specific topics that are extremely present in your world today, our goal is for you to spend some time discussing in a safe place so you ask questions and develop a stronger viewpoint on each of them.** Even if they are not present in your high school right now, they will eventually be present on a college campus, workforce, or military ... or just in the general culture of the world you live in.

Our goal isn't for you to leave here each week with a definitive answer to some of life's tough questions when it comes to living life after high school, but to get you at least **thinking about the topic and determining how that connects with whatever faith you claim to have.**

Last week we talked about sin, what makes it, and how do we stand up for what is right and still be a good friend.

This week we are going to look at the idea of exploring science but also trusting the Bible and how to deal with the idea given to you often that you should choose either faith in God or faith in science. Can we love both?

For many – especially your age and college aged students – they believe that they will reach a point where they will no longer be able to “believe” both science AND the Bible – and therefore, will have to reject one in order to embrace the other. **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Are science and Christianity mutually exclusive? Why or why not?
To work in the field of science, do we have to check our faith at the door?**

While science looks for natural causes in recurring natural phenomena, **science is not “based” on the absence of God**, and not all scientists are (or need to be) atheists.

- Christians have historically been science-explorers, not science-deniers! (Galileo, Blaise Pascal, Isaac Newton)

VIDEO: Jordan Peterson – Science and Religion.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4GQfU_KZJA

A study by Rice University assistant professor Elaine Howard Ecklund surveyed nearly **1,700 scientists and found that nearly 50% of them consider themselves religious**, debunking the widespread assumption that only atheists become scientists.¹

¹ Elaine Howard Ecklund, *Science vs Religion: What Scientists Really Think*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

SHOW QUOTE ON SCREEN:

Theologian Michael J. Kruger, asserts not only are science and Christianity *not* at war--but that science actually *needs* Christianity in order to work: “...**the entire scientific enterprise is actually built on certain philosophical principles--principles that themselves aren't drawn from science. Science...needs a worldview in which the universe operates in an orderly, predictable, uniform fashion--what scientists call the *uniformity of nature*.**”

Explain this quote below:

Think about the **principle of uniformity**:

Without this principle of uniformity, scientists could never reach any conclusions from their experimentation.

- They *need* water to boil consistently at 212°F,
- and E to always equal mc^2 .
- **They must take on faith that the universe will operate in the future as it has in the past.**
- And the worldview that provides a reason to believe this will be so is *not* an atheistic/evolutionary one.
- **Only a Christian worldview--that God created and sustains the universe--can supply a reasonable basis for the uniformity of nature.**

So here's the deep thinking question:

How could everything that exists have come out of nothing? Is it possible that the universe just randomly “happened”?

It's a great question scientists have been trying to answer for a long time.

First – **it's now scientifically accepted that the universe had a beginning.**

- Scientists today believe that the universe was not always here but began to exist at some finite point in time. How long ago? No one is certain.
- To date, all key scientific & philosophical evidence points away from an eternal universe and toward an eternal Creator.
 - **Once nothing existed ... now something does.**

Philosophically thinking – something that had a beginning cannot be eternal.

- **And whatever had a beginning must have a cause.**

IF YOU WANT TO GET REALLY TECHNICAL:

The second law of thermodynamics, which states that **heat transfer occurs spontaneously only from *higher to lower temperatures*, establishes the concept of entropy as a physical property of living systems.**

- This means *matter tends to deteriorate or degrade over time*, not proliferate and increase in complexity.

ANOTHER TECHNICAL EXAMPLE:

One of the key features of life--*cellular information*--is necessary for even the most basic forms of matter to exist. **The simplest bacterial cells are filled with enormous amounts of coded data, even so that a single primitive cell would require *hundreds of thousands of bits of information precisely sequenced in its DNA for life to occur.***

- My belief is that without a designer, it would be almost mathematically impossible for such information to combine in a way that *consistently* produces life, much less life with increasing complexity.

- This is why **many scientists today are conceding that *intelligent design* is the best explanation for the origin of life**--even if they are unwilling to concede that such design points to God as the intelligent designer!
- Think of it like this: **trying to assemble new bacteria or proteins by random mutation or chance would be like a thief trying to guess the precise numerical combination of a bicycle lock with not four digits, but 10:10 billion possible combinations exist--but only one would open the lock.** The thief could spend a lifetime trying random combinations with only infinitesimal odds of even one-time success.

SHOW QUOTE ON SCREEN:

No atheist can begin to explain how an impersonal, purposeless, meaningless and amoral universe accidentally created beings (us!) who are full of personality and obsessed with purpose, meaning and morals. **AGREE OR DISAGREE? WHY?**

What about evolution? Is it “settled science” or a simply one scientific theory among many?

- Evolution is a lightning rod in the perceived conflict between science and Christianity.

What do you think about this Richard Dawkin’s quote in regard to evolution. (He claims himself as an anti-God evangelist) (SHOW QUOTE ON SCREEN)

“If you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane...” - Richard Dawkins

Now compare it to this Lee Strobel quote: (SHOW QUOTE ON SCREEN)

“I realized that to stay an atheist, I would have to believe that nothing produces everything, non-life produces life, randomness produces fine-tuning, chaos produces information, unconsciousness produces consciousness, and non-reason produces reason. Those leaps of faith were simply too big for me to make...” - *Christian apologist and former atheist Lee Strobel*

Like Strobel, some say it takes more faith to deny the existence of an “intelligent designer” than to believe in one. How is this a reasonable view?

Most evolutionists today won't even venture a guess as to how life began, while at the same time insisting that the source of life couldn't possibly be God.

- **Evolution could well explain some changes in matter over time, but it in no way precludes the existence of God.** Even if evolution could be proven to be 100% correct about how new species developed out of previous ones, it does not disprove God as the agent of creation.

DISCUSS QUOTE ON SCREEN:

“When evolution is turned into an All-encompassing Theory explaining absolutely everything we believe, feel, and do as the product of natural selection, then we are not in the area of science, but of philosophy. Evolution as an All-encompassing theory has insurmountable difficulties as a worldview.” – Theologian Timothy Keller (*The Reason for God*)

What do you think about this quote?

In truth, many respected scientists hold **views that balance aspects of both evolutionary science, and belief in creation by God.** Francis Collins, the director of the National Institutes of Health, believes in evolutionary science but also holds that the “fine-tuning, beauty, and

order of nature nonetheless point to a divine Creator," a recognition that played a part in his conversion from atheism to Christianity.

Rather than insisting on an either/or absolute, or an intellectual duel between two competing moral philosophies, a range of plausible possibilities exist between the poles of the evolution/creation debate.

**There's no denying the universe in which we exist is incredibly fine-tuned for life. How so?
SHOW QUOTE ON SCREEN:**

For organic life to exist, several fundamental constants of physics must exist simultaneously and in very, very narrow ranges. The odds of this configuration happening by chance are almost nil. Francis Collins (director of the National Institutes of Health) explains: "When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants--the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and weak nuclear force, etc.--that have precise values. If any one of these constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it. Matter would not have been able to coalesce, there would have been no galaxy, stars, planets or people." – Francis Collins (quoted by Timothy Keller in *A Reason for God*)

The idea that such a finely tuned universe as ours could happen by chance, through random mutation of matter seems extremely unlikely.

Even scientist Stephen Hawking once said, "The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. It would be very difficult to explain why the universe would have begun in just this way except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us."

Have student read this passage:

***Psalms 19:1-4** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

- Then compare it to the following examples on their handout.

EXAMPLES: (HANDOUT)

The size of our planet for example, is perfect. Its size and corresponding gravity holds a thin layer of particular gases only extending 50 miles above the Earth's surface. If the Earth were smaller, such an atmosphere would be impossible. If it were larger, its atmosphere would become inhospitable for plant, animal, and human life. The Earth's distance from the sun is optimal. Any further away and we would freeze. Any closer by even a fractional amount and we would burn up. Likewise, the Earth's rotational speed around the sun and the tilt of its axis allow its entire surface to be properly warmed and cooled each day. And even our moon is the perfect size and distance from the Earth to exercise the correct gravitational pull upon tides and ocean waters. Speaking of water, the precise chemical balance of this universal solvent enables us to live in an environment of fluctuating temperature change while keeping our bodies at a constant 98.6 degrees. And water's unique surface tension allows it to flow upward against gravity in plants, bringing life-giving sustenance to the tops of even the tallest

trees--and the fact that it freezes from the top down--and floats--means fish can live in it even during winter.

The Earth is indeed a wonder, but man is perhaps the biggest wonder of all creation. The human brain processes vast amounts of input--more than a million messages a second. The human eye can distinguish among 7 million colors, focus automatically, and handle 1.5 million visual clues--simultaneously! And the DNA code inside each human cell operates much like a computer program, with four chemicals abbreviated as letters A, T, G and C combining in precise, ordered sequences of 3 billion letters.

After reading about these specific, precise, and intricate design examples in comparison to what Psalm 19 says, what are your thoughts?

Natural, biological causes are completely lacking as an explanation for such precise, programmed information is involved. Where there is design, there must be intent. **The heavens, the earth, and even our own bodies are declaring the glory of God from the telescope to the microscope, but many can still be blinded from seeing it.**

Why doesn't the Bible give us more/better answers about creation and the origin of mankind? Did God miss something?

Share this quote and get thoughts after asking the question above:

“Scripture is not an encyclopedia of information to which we go when we are curious or in doubt. It is God speaking to us his own word, telling us what he wishes to tell us and omitting what is of no significance. (Have you ever made of list of all those items you are intensely curious about but for which there is no biblical data?)” *Eugene H. Peterson, That Hallelujah Banquet*

The Bible should shape every believer's understanding regarding the origin of the universe and of human life. But the Bible does not spell out specifically what that understanding should be. Christians can and do have differing views on this complex issue and base those views on their interpretations of the very same accounts in Genesis 1 and 2.

- Some Christians believe a literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account teaches that God created all life forms in a series of six, 24-hour days, only a few thousand years ago.
- Others read the same account and believe that God was the primary cause in creation, but that at some point natural causes “took over” and completed the work over a greater period of time.

How we interpret the Bible in general and those early Genesis passages in particular will of course shape our views.

- The Bible is not, of course a scientific textbook (or a textbook of any kind). It is a book of God's history with man, and it employs many different literary genres.
- Genesis contains more than one of these genres.
 - It contains **history** (the lineages of families, events in the lives of the men and women, famines, earthly kingdoms, births and deaths.
 - But it is also contains passages that are **poetic**, utilizing metaphor and symbolism to advance the meaning of its story.

Even though God doesn't spell out His involvement in creation with great specificity, the Bible does invest the creation story with meaning.

- Man and woman are created by God *in his image and* are given a role in his creation.
- Only they--and not the animals--are made to commune deeply with one another and with God.
- They are to populate the earth and steward it, all while walking with God.

To have questions about God's exact involvement in creation does not require that one question God's existence, or his love.

- While the details may be in doubt, the big picture is not, and God believers can ask scientific questions and pursue their answers without abandoning their faith or putting it in jeopardy.

Remember this: *Many good scientists have concluded from these observations that an intelligent God must have chosen to create the universe with such beautiful, simple, and life-giving properties. Many other equally good scientists are nevertheless atheists. Both conclusions are positions of faith.* - Rebecca McLaughlin

QR Code for the church Darkroom website to go deeper.

Close with prayer