



TIME OF GRACE®

Skeptical Faith: God Loves Science?

Study Notes

Summary

The dichotomy of science/reason/logic/proof and faith/religion/belief/God is too much for many to overcome. How can people of faith share the Word with those who oppose faith altogether? The apostle Paul gives us two compelling answers in Romans chapters 1 and 2.

5 Things to Know About God and Science

1. God _____ science.
 - **Romans 1:19,20:** ¹⁹ What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.
2. Everyone has _____.
 - **Hebrews 11:3:** By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
3. Only God explains _____.
 - **Romans 2:14,15:** ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)
4. Only God explains _____.
 - **Ecclesiastes 3:11:** He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.
5. Jesus loved _____.

Points to Ponder

1. Read Psalm 19. How does the author remind us of the powerful purpose of the universe that science loves to study?
2. If you don't/didn't believe in a God who created us, what is/would be your best explanation of the existence of objective evil (i.e., stuff that is always and absolutely wrong)? Upon reflecting upon your answer, is it reasonable?
3. Study Romans 1:18-25. What is the ironic part about people who deny that God made them? (Hint: They don't stop worshiping!)

Homework for Next Week

Read Luke 16:19-31.

Time of Grace Ministry
Skeptical Faith: God Loves Science?
Romans 1:10, 2:14-15, Hebrews 11:3, Ecclesiastes 3:11
May 2, 2021

Pastor Mike Novotny

In so many different ways, we can feel stuck. Do we have to be a person who chooses data and evidence, who engages the mind, the intellect, and our heads? Or do we have to go with faith, with trust, with church, with Jesus to engage our hearts?

About six months ago, I got an email from a Christian who is studying to be a chemist and she described to me how she felt stuck; stuck between the truths that she had grown up with in her church and the theories that she was now learning in the classroom. In her email, she wrote to me, "Pastor Mike, how can I continue to believe in a God of creation when I'm now learning this flood of evidence that proves the theory of evolution?" And she didn't know what to do. Even worse was the fact that she didn't know with whom she could talk. In the classroom, she admitted that many people had no room for God; they didn't want to talk even at all about supernatural causes or possibilities. Science was science that explained everything; end of discussion.

You know, I was blessed to sit down with that young chemist in the making and have a conversation. And I had to admit to her that I really lack her expertise. My study has been in theology and not in chemistry so I'd have to defer her now to Pastor Michael or to the PhD's who love Jesus and hold onto their sciences. But at the same time, we had a really good conversation and that conversation allowed us to dive deep into this tension and this topic. And at the end of the conversation she felt so much better; the tension seemed to lessen just a little bit. And that's why today I want to share with you a little bit of what I shared with her. I'm not going to answer every question you have today about creation and evolution, about the big bang or the age of the earth, about human origins or DNA ancestry. What I'm going to do are put five ideas in the back of your mind that I want you to think about when you feel like you have to walk away from Jesus for the sake of hard evidence. When you feel like your grip is loosening on the Scripture, on the church, and on your Savior himself, I want these five things to pop into the back of your mind to remind you that according to the Bible itself, you don't have to choose between head and heart. You can be a person who embraces both.

So grab a pen because here's the first of the five things I want to tell you. I want you to know, first of all, that God likes science. If God the Father had a minivan and the minivan had a bumper sticker, that bumper sticker might, "I heart science." And if Jesus had posters in his Nazareth bedroom, one of them might have been the periodic table because God likes science. Do you know what the word science actually means? It comes from the Latin word "scientia," or "scantia," which means "knowledge." And since God likes knowledge, God happens to like science.

And here's why. Look at this passage from the book of Romans. The apostle Paul said, "What may be known about God is plain to them," to people, "because God has made it plain to them. For since creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."

It kind of reminds me of this book. A few months ago, I picked up this massive biography on Leonardo da Vinci. Any of you read it? I saw it in an airport and I think I decided to pick it up because it had a lot of pictures inside. But actually, do you know what was better than the pictures? The words because in many, many, many pages, the author described what was in the pictures. He talked about how da Vinci became the master of making two-dimensional paintings look three-dimensional; how he could draw a person or an angel or Jesus in a robe and make the billows and shadows just pop off the painting right toward your eyes. And when I understood the technique of the man and the method, I came to appreciate, respect, and praise him even more. I found out through this book that the more you grasp the method, the greater the praise for the man. And it's the same with God. The more you grasp God's method, the more you come to appreciate who he is as a creator, as an intelligent designer, and as a man. And that's why God loves it when we study science. When you go into nursing and you start to grasp not that people just exist but how a sperm and an egg become a peanut and then a grapefruit and then a watermelon and then a little kid Uncle Joe puts in a cute little onesie, like, God loves that! When you grasp just the sheer impossibility of that happening but it does because God's brain is impossible to grasp, he likes it. When you go into mathematics or engineering or accounting and you know how numbers work and you see the wisdom behind it, God likes it. When you figure out how buildings stand, how gravity works and structure and pressure and you learn what makes the greatest cathedrals on planet earth stand where people gather to worship the exalted God, God likes it. So when you're filled with scintilla, when you're filled with knowledge, God likes it. He likes science because he likes to be known.

And I think that's why over the centuries, and even in recent times, so many scientists have liked God right back. A few years ago, an author named Barukh Shalev, he did a study of people who won the Nobel Peace Prize in the 20th century. And he found out that 73 percent of chemistry winners, 65 percent of physics winners, and 62 percent of medicine winners of the Nobel Prize were Christians proving that you don't have to be a junk scientist or a person who dismisses God to be at the highest intellectual level of your field.

I want you to know that everyone has faith. Everyone on the entire spectrum - from the militant atheist who's pushing evolution to the most fundamental, Bible thumping evangelical, everyone has faith. Everyone trusts in things that they can't yet see. Everyone has theories that they believe the facts support and gaps in those theories that they just trust that one day the gaps will be filled in to prove what they always believed. I know it's true for me as a Christian. As I look at the modern theories and the scientific data, there's some stuff that makes sense to me as a person who believes in God and there's some stuff that I don't get just yet.

And the Bible admits that in the book of Hebrews. Look at this passage. It says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made of what was visible." How do we understand? How do Christians know that God spoke, he

commanded, and the universe came into existence? Well, the answer is faith. I wasn't there. I haven't seen the YouTube evidence. I believe that God the Father is the maker of heaven and earth but I didn't see God the Father who made heaven and earth. I have faith. But I also have evidence. Have you ever heard of the fine-tuning argument before? It's this idea that our universe, and especially our planet, is like this giant soundboard and things are so finely tuned like the constants and forces of the universe are so finely tuned, that it's nearly impossible that we would just happen to exist on earth. Like the fact that planet earth is so far from the sun - you know, we're not too close that we burn up and melt and we're not so far away that we freeze - is tuned just right. The gravitational force is just right. It's strong enough that it pulls oxygen down to the earth's atmosphere but it's not so strong that toxic gases are pulled down to the surface of the earth where you would suffocate and choke and die.

So we have all these like finely tuned arguments and if you just believe it was enough time and enough chance and hey, here we are, as walking, talking human beings, the odds are pretty much against that. And so the scientist who says there is no God has to have an insane amount of faith. The last time I consulted statisticians to figure out like what are the odds that this would just happen, they say that all those things being tuned just as they are so that life could exist on earth are like you winning the Powerball lottery not once, and not twice in a row, but 342,000,000 times in a row. Come on, would you bet your bank account on those odds? But some people bet their soul.

"Ah," but the scientist says, "but, Pastor, you're forgetting about the multi-verse theory." Have you heard of it? It's probably the best argument that atheists have for the existence of life on earth. They'll admit, okay, the odds of us existing as human beings on a planet are crazy if this was the only universe. But what if there are multiple universes, millions of universes, and we just happen to be on the one where life could exist? Where all the things are finely tuned just right? That'd be logical, wouldn't it?

Let me steal an analogy I've heard a couple of other pastors use. Let's imagine we're in an Old West saloon and a bunch of salty looking cowboys are playing poker for some good money at this table and they hear the spurs and the double doors come swinging open and a new cowboy sits down. He buys all of his chips, he puts in a big bet, and when people call his bluff, what does he lay down onto the table? A royal flush. The odds of getting a royal flush? One in 649,470 and the other cowboys start to reach for their guns. They deal a second hand. Money goes to the center of the table, the new cowboy pushes in all of his chips, and what does he lay down on the table for a second time? A royal flush and the hammers get pulled back on the revolvers. The third time the cards go around and what does the new cowboy lay down for three straight hands? Another royal flush and now they pull out the guns, they're pointed right at this guy's forehead, and what does he say? "Guys, I know the odds are impossible but what if we just happen to be in the one universe, out of multiple universes, where a guy just happens to get three royal flushes the first time he walks into the bar?" What do the cowboys do? Bang. Now come on, we don't stake life and death, eternity and our very soul, on odds like that. And that little analogy goes to prove that it's not just the Christian with his Bible; it's the atheist with his data. Everyone has faith. Everyone trusts that there's just some things that they can't yet see that the evidence will eventually prove. So this isn't a choice between head and heart. These are two people with both head and heart that are debating the best possible explanation.

So that's thing number two to remember; let's jump to number three. It's a little more philosophical. I would propose to you that only God explains evil. If you want to believe in moral right and wrong, that something should be done and other things shouldn't, that all the time things like abuse or assault or genocide are evil, you need a universe with a God who made it. Did any of you catch that case on Court TV about the cat who killed the mouse? You know, poor little mouse had like a family of thirteen. The cat just snuck up on it, pounced, even toyed with it, and murdered it. And it turns out that the cat's people had been murdering the mouse's people for generations upon generations. You hear about that case? No, you didn't. Why not? Because they're animals; it's just like how the jungle works, right? Survival of the fittest; the advance of the species. So now let me tell you this: If we're just animals, why don't we feel the same way? If one race is strong enough to conquer and oppress and enslave another race, why isn't that okay? If one country has the intelligence and the military power to eliminate another smaller country, why isn't that just the advancement of stronger genes? Why would we have lawyers for humans? Why would we think that racism is wrong? Why would we always insist that Hitler was an evil man? Because we're not animals. We're people who have been created by God with a moral sense of both right and wrong. There's a great passage to prove that in Romans chapter two. Paul said, "When gentiles who do not have the law do by nature things required by the law, they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness." People feel right and wrong. They sense good and bad. In our conversations with our children, with our politicians, and with each other, we use that word that requires the existence of God: "Should." You shouldn't do that. Says who? You? What if I think I should? No, the very word itself appeals to a higher authority who says that some things are always good and some things are always bad. No matter the culture, no matter the personal preference, the existence of absolute good and absolute evil proves to something that science simply can't. It proves to a spiritual realm; it proves God.

On that same line of rationale, number four, only God can explain our next fill in the blank. Only God can explain the deep need for human meaning. You ever hear about that Hollywood pet that was on antidepressants because it felt like it wasn't making a difference in the world? No, you didn't. Why not? I mean, if dogs can have sex, supper, and a safe place to sleep, they're pretty happy. Why isn't the same thing true with human beings? Why can you be rich, like American rich, why can your neighborhood be safe like small-town safe, and people still feel empty inside? I mean, cats don't cry out, "What does it all mean?" And mosquitoes don't switch college majors, puppies don't read *The Purpose Driven Life*. Why not? Because they're animals and you're not. You didn't just evolve out of the goo and through the zoo and become you. No, you're a person that God himself created. I love how King Solomon, the wisest man on planet earth said it. In Ecclesiastes 3 he said, "God has made everything beautiful in its time and he has also set eternity in the human heart." God himself put an eternal longing in your heart so that you would never be satisfied until you found it. And you could have all the safety, all the supper, and all the sex you want but there'd still be something in your heart that's longing for more. God created this God-shaped hole within you and unlike the animals, until you can find him, you will be restless, searching for something more.

You know who proves that? Ellen and Tom Brady and Jim Carrey, the Foo Fighters, and so many other celebrities. Two thousand years ago, the Roman poet Horace said, "Why is it that no

one lives satisfied with their condition?" And 2,000 years later, our Hollywood celebrities prove that he was onto something. Think of all the advancement in the 2,000 years. Think of the kind of luxuries that Ellen and Jim Carrey and the Foo Fighters get to enjoy but do you know what they say in their songs, in their speeches, in their social media posts? That they're not satisfied; they're still searching for something. In one of my favorite running songs, the Foo Fighters rocked, "Nothing satisfies but I'm getting close." Ellen DeGeneres recently admitted that she needs an approval patch because if she doesn't have a daily hit, she simply can't be happy. The billionaire who sold Minecraft and is living in luxury says that something's wrong with his heart. Tom Brady won multiple Super Bowls, he's married to a supermodel, has great kids and lives in one of the safest communities in our country and he still admitted to a reporter there's got to be something else. Science can't explain the deep human need to live a meaningful life. It can't explain why we care about legacy and generational impact. If we were just animals and just propagating our species, having a bunch of sex and a bunch of kids and surviving would be all we need, but there's something in your heart that's longing for something more.

So let me tell you today from this book what the laboratory cannot. As the old Christian St. Augustine said, "Your heart will be restless until it rests in God." Until you can find your heart face-to-face with God, until you can find your love and friendship and safety and identity and approval in God, you'll be restless. And you could have the social media impact of Ellen, you could have the sports career or Tom Brady, you could travel the world and see tens of thousands of people screaming your name like the Foo Fighters but until you see God face-to-face, something will be missing. Which means, friends, you don't have to be rich and you don't have to be famous. You don't have to be skinnier; you don't have to get a promotion. Right now, you can find the thing that celebrities are aching to reach: God. He has set eternity in the human heart and when you come face-to-face with eternal God, you can find it.

Which brings us to point number five. As we fill in this blank, I want to admit to you that this is the least logical part of today's message. It's total Bible-biased and I want to tell you upfront that I'm only saying it because I'm a Christian but I still want you to know it. I want you to know this, number five, that Jesus loved Genesis. For a lot of people, the struggle with science comes right on the first pages of the Bible. Like, God created, he spoke, and in six days - everything, really? Adam and Eve, like two human - you believe that was an actual story with an actual tree and an actual - wait, Noah? You think a guy got on a boat and the animals marched two by two and rains actually flooded the earth - do you believe that? And my answer is, "Yes!" I actually do because Jesus did; because Jesus talked about Adam and Eve and the beginning and a marriage in Genesis 2 and Noah in Genesis 6. Like they weren't fairy tales once upon a time but as actual historical events that actually happened. Which begs the question: Why would you trust Jesus? Why would you view Genesis in the same way that Jesus did? And I suppose, I could get very scientific with you. I could tell you about all the evidence that points to a living Jesus; all the incredible, like logical proof that says that Jesus actually did rise from the dead. But instead of going the logical route, let me turn it to a more emotional one. I think you should trust Jesus because he knows you and, yet, he still loves you. Like Jesus knows the whole story but he still likes you. That Jesus knows all the stuff that's messed up and maybe not just messed up but evil, the crooked thoughts that come into our hearts, and yet, he still loves us. Jesus hurt every time we said we're sorry for the exact same thing and even though it's been 100, 1,000, a 100,000 times, he still loves us. Jesus' love is totally illogical and I still can't figure out why he would do

it. If he knows the whole story, if he knows things about me that you don't know about me, that I don't even remember about me, and yet, he still loves me, why would I not trust him? The accountant in my heart doesn't get why Jesus would not count my sins but he doesn't. The God who knows everything, who put every star in the sky and knows its very name, he has decided to not remember your sins anymore. I don't get why he does but he does. The illogical love of God did not stop him from calling sinners like us cleansed, pure and holy saints. And if you're not a Christian, this might not make sense, but when we Christians look at the cross of Jesus, when we see the God who entered the universe he created to save the people who had rebelled against him, when we find out the fact that God is faithful and he likes us and we can approach his throne boldly because of what Jesus did, we trust him. Even if all the data doesn't back it up just yet, we trust him. And if Jesus believes it, we believe it, too.

So if you're struggling with faith and science, if you feel torn between head and heart, the best thing, Christian, that I can encourage you to do is take some time at the cross of Jesus. Think about the things that science can't prove; that you are saved by his blood. And trust in the God who loved you so much he came out of heaven into this earth. Know that you can put your faith in him and you will never, ever be disappointed.

Put those five things together and you have a great weapon against doubt, despair, and unbelief. You have great things to remember; that you're not a fool, you're not ignorant, and you're not dumb for holding the book, the Bible in your hands, and following Jesus. And if you do that, you can be just like Buzz. Back in 1969, Buzz Aldrin and a team of astronauts, they blasted a 103,000-pound rocket carrying 5.6 million pounds of propellant and they shot off 25,000 miles an hour into space. It was one of America's, and science's, crowning achievements; that a man was about to walk on the moon. But before Buzz Aldrin stepped out of the spacecraft onto the surface of the moon, do you know what he did? He got out bread and wine and he worshipped. He read the words of his Savior: "I am the vine and you're the branches. And if a person remains in my love, they will bear much fruit." Like the astronauts from Apollo 8 before him who read Genesis 1 when they first saw the earth from the moon's perspective, these men realized that you don't have to choose between head and heart, between being saved by Jesus and being a follower of science. They proved it's not an either-or equation and that with Jesus the tension doesn't need to exist. You can know the scientific world and know the God who made it.

Let's pray.

Dear Jesus, thank you for things that science simply can't prove. We could have studied the stars and the trees and this universe for a thousand lifetimes but none of them could assure us that you love us personally. So thank you for the Scriptures; thank you for breaking in and speaking audibly that people could hear and then record the very words and heart of God. Heavenly Father, I know the enemy wants to use scientism against Christianity; this belief that the only things that are true and real are those that can be tested and proven but that's not true. That's an assumption and it's faith in something that people don't have to believe. So give us eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart that trusts that there's many things that we can learn from the universe and there's some things that we can only learn from you and from what you've revealed in the word. Keep us strong in our faith. Keep us humble as we listen and give us trust that

Jesus wasn't wrong. That the Savior who died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins would never deceive us or lead us astray and we can follow him in full faith.

We pray this all, Jesus, in your beautiful name. Amen.