

A little boy comes to his dad asks, "Dad, where did human beings come from?" and his father says, "Well, we descended from apes." The little boy goes to his mom. "Mom, where did human beings come from?" She says, "We were created by God in His image." The boy says, "But Dad said we descended from apes." Mom says, "Well, I was talking about my side of the family."

Questions about whether Faith and Science can get along are actually a relatively new thing. Yes, there are a few stories like that of Galileo and his heresy trial, but the majority of scientists throughout history have been men and women inspired by the beauty of God's creation to explore and question and live out one of God's very first commands:

Genesis 1:28 says,

God blessed the [male and female He had made] and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Man and woman were placed on this earth to take care of God's creation, to learn from it, and use its resources wisely. And from our earliest of records, man has been mesmerized by the beauty and splendor of the world we live in...and studied it. This place is absolutely amazing.

I know some people are not like this, but, for me, the more I know about how something works...the more beautiful it becomes. The more I learn about the interworking of stars and gravity and the universe the more amazing it is for me to sit on my patio and stare at them for hours. And in studying, I find the presence of God.

Much like a piece of artwork has the presence of the artist...so creation has the presence of God.

Science and Faith are two amazing arms of what we call revelation. Revelation is how we know who God is and what He is like. It is how God has revealed himself to human beings. He has done this in a couple unique ways: First, he reveals himself through Scripture, and then ultimately through His Word Jesus Christ.

But God has also chose to reveal himself through Creation.

Romans 1:20

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.

Everywhere we look in the natural world we see something that, to those who are willing to accept it, reveals the nature and character of God. In a very real way, science is the

language of God. Romans 1:20 reminds us that God's eternal power and divine nature are "clearly seen" in the natural world around us.

And yet, it has become a battleground...if we are going to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ and have conversations with those who are seeking...we must find a way to navigate these waters. This has become one of the biggest reasons for discounting belief in Jesus Christ.

Francis Collins, author of *The Language of God* and lead scientist who mapped Human DNA, says,

"Will we turn our backs on science because it is perceived as a threat to God, abandoning all the promise of advancing our understanding of nature and applying that to the alleviation of suffering and the betterment of humankind? Alternatively, will we turn our backs on faith, concluding that science has rendered the spiritual life no longer necessary, and that traditional religious symbols can now be replaced by engravings of the double helix on our alters?"

Both of these choices are profoundly dangerous. Both deny truth. Both will diminish the nobility of humankind. Both will be devastating to our future. And both are unnecessary. The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome. He can be worshipped in the cathedral or in the laboratory. His creation is majestic, awesome, intricate and beautiful - and it cannot be at war with itself. Only we imperfect humans can start such battles. And only we can end them."

If we are going to be disciples who are open to conversations about God and faith...if we are going to be disciples of Jesus who navigate through this treacherous battlefield and actually live in our world as salt and light...we have to deal with this issue.

The first thing we have to do is...

Look past the Rhetoric and Fallacies

In seminary, I had some very good professors. One of them stands out because of his approach to dealing with controversial topics. Dr. Truesdale was adamant that we present the opposing side of an argument using their best representatives and their best arguments.

Too often, when dealing with an opinion we disagree with, we use the losers and the degenerates from the other side to illustrate our point and infer that ALL the other people who hold those same beliefs are like this idiot. Or we use the weakest arguments and examples from the other side because they are easy to knock down and make them look foolish. This is called setting up straw men.

Both sides do this, but if we are going to live with integrity, we must deal with the best and brightest minds available on each side of conversation. So when we start talking

about this subject, we must get past some of the hype and some of the assumptions that get in our way.

Not all evolutionists are trying to destroy the Christian faith.

In fact, many men and women, solid in their Christian beliefs, have come to the conclusion that God used evolution to create the world around us.

The person who asked this question wrote this: “My question pertains to the age of the earth, or at least the perceived age. Science has been a go-to for me for a long time. I know that some someone once went through the Bible and made a time line that says the earth is 6000 years old, and supposedly all Christians should accept this.”

Many, who would not consider themselves Christian, want to know why the Church seems so antagonistic toward the scientific field for simply following the evidence and seeking after truth.

They are not out to destroy or even attack the Christian faith. They are not rejecting the witness of Scripture. They are simply doing what a scientist is supposed to do... studying the world in which they live, as objectively as possible, testing it according to the Scientific Method, and then explaining it with the best possible explanation they can.

Charles Darwin, at least nominally, started out as a Christian. He studied the world around him as an expression of his faith...and the more he studied the more he found the principles of evolution to be true. What most don't know is that Darwin kept his findings and conclusions quiet for almost 30 years for fear of what those in the Church would think; knowing they would reject him. He was not seeking to destroy the Church. He was not seeking to destroy faith. He simply followed the evidence as he saw it. What ultimately played a big role in his leaving the Church and the faith was the way he was treated for his theory than anything else.

The word theory does not mean the same thing for those outside of science as it does inside.

One of the funniest “rebuttals” people attempt to use against science is the idea of calling Evolution a theory. Outside the scientific world, the word theory is something akin to a guess.

What is your theory about what happened? What is your best guess?

So the logic goes, they call it the Theory of Evolution therefore, it isn't fact.

In Science, a theory is an idea that has been supported by hundred if not thousands of experiments. If it is a guess, it is called a hypothesis. So, a hypothesis is really more in line with our use of the word theory. They make a hypothesis, and then test it to see if it is true.

Early last year, I was invited to a Biologos Roundtable discussion at the University of Akron. Seated around the table were a wide range of scientists and pastors, from a wide variety of denominations and backgrounds. One of the presenters said, "There is more verifiable proof for the principles of evolution than there are for gravity."

Am I saying you have to believe in Evolution? Absolutely not. I'm just saying, be careful when approaching the topic with those outside the faith.

Now, there are some things the other side of the fence needs to be careful with:

If it isn't scientific then it isn't true.

There is, in our modern culture, a belief that if it can't be demonstrated scientifically then it cannot be true. This is called scientism. If something is real then it can be touched, tasted, smelled, and recreated experimentally. The problem with this is there are many things that cannot be proven using the Scientific Method, and yet are still true.

Love, Hope, Beauty...these cannot be demonstrated using the principles of Science. They cannot be tested, they cannot be recreated in experiments, they are beyond explanation of science.

But many have come to this idea that if it can't be seen, touched, experimented on, and explained then it can't possibly be true.

Connected to this is the idea that if someone says, "Research shows..." then the case is settled. Some ideas have been researched and demonstrated over and over and over again. These are fairly trustable. But the media loves a good research project and will often

And this has led to another, logically inconsistent problem, as they then reason that

Science proves there is no God.

The problem with this is they can't, by their own use of the Scientific Method, demonstrate this at all.

Science can prove there is a set of underlying principles that govern how the universe functions. It can tell us how things work and what is going on in our world, but it cannot prove whether or not God exists. In fact, Science is really good at the How? question, but it simply cannot answer the Why? or the Who? question.

For the Scientist who works back to the very beginning of his study and proclaims the Big Bang Theory...he is stumped as to the what and why of before that Bang.

Reflecting on this in his book, *God and the Astronomers*, Robert Jastrow writes,
'At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the

mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

Science can only test that which is testable...the minute a scientist makes a statement for or against the existence of God based on science is the minute they have left the realm of scientific inquiry and entered the realm of theology and philosophy.

At the heart of this tension is something we all need to realize:

The Bible is not written to answer our questions and meet our purposes.

One of the biggest, modern issues is that people read the Bible with modern assumptions and questions...questions and assumption the original writers and readers knew nothing about! When you and I study the Bible we have to start by asking, "What was the writer really trying to communicate? And, how would the readers understand this passage?"

John Ortberg says, "You have to start by asking about the historical context of the intended audience, because the Bible always emerges out of a conversation in its day."

So many people arrogantly bypass this with some very spiritual sounding advice: "All I need to do is read the Bible in plain language and let the Holy Spirit guide me." This really gets us into trouble when we ask only modern, scientific questions of a Genesis 1 and 2 which were written to an ancient audience who didn't give a single thought to the scientific questions we are asking. The author does not even have our Scientific questions in mind when he is writing these chapters.

John Walton wrote a wonderful book call the *Lost World of Genesis 1*, he points out, Those in the ancient Mesopotamian world were asking, "Where did we come from? How did the earth get here?" But it was very different than the conversation or the agenda in our day, and it's critical to understanding Genesis.

In the ancient world, they weren't particularly concerned about how something got here from nothing. He notes that Genesis 1 and 2 are primarily about the one true God...not all of these little tribal gods fighting back the forces of chaos. They were very concerned with how order triumphed over chaos. That was the big thing their stories were about.

He writes primarily in Genesis about how the one true God, the good God, was inaugurating the cosmos into a functioning temple (there's all kind of temple imagery in Genesis 1-2; that's why), where he would take up residence and then deploy his image bearers (that's all human beings made in God's image) to extend his reign to exercise dominion so that all the earth could be ordered and become sacred space where God could dwell with his community.

The Creation Narratives of Genesis are not written to explain the origins of our world in scientific terms and answer our scientific questions...it is written to explain the Why and the Who? To force it to answer those questions is like watching reality television and thinking this is actual reality!

One of the biggest parts of this journey for me was to spend a great deal of time studying the culture, the original language, and the writing style used in Genesis. I came to the conclusion that reading it in scientific terms destroyed what God was trying to teach us through the text. And I came to this conclusion without even considering other explanation of how our world came to be. I am a theologian and a preacher who is committed to looking at this text and asking, What is God saying through this Scripture? and What does this say about our faith walk with him? And when I looked at the text God provides, I did not see an explanation of How God created the world...but rather why He created the world.

Conclusion

John Ortberg tells the story of going to a similar Biologos Conference and meeting Christian scientist after Christians scientist who expressed a deep sadness. And I think many Christians, who support science AND want to remain faithful can feel this way as well...

They would say, "You know, when I'm at work and I'm with a bunch of scientists, they're really skeptical about my faith. They're suspicious about me." Then they'd say, "When I go to my church, they're really skeptical about me because of my science. I feel like I don't have any place where I really belong."

When we wrestle with the big questions of Science and Faith we are wrestling with obeying one of the very first commands of God: To exercise dominion over the world He created, to study it, to be curious, to be stewards of this great place God has given us! And we have to be free enough to believe that however God created the world, He is the one who created it!

Here at Crossroads, we want to be a place where people are free to follow Jesus in this way, to ask the tough question, to be seeker and to fulfill the true meaning of the word disciple...which means a learner...someone who is constantly seeking to learn more and more about Jesus and the world where we live.

Jesus is the first person who would tell you, "You must follow the truth ruthlessly wherever it leads." C.S. Lewis says, "God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers. If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you, you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all."

This topic requires a lot of challenging thought. There are two very good books I would like to encourage you to read as you work through the issues yourself.

John Walton's The Lost World of Genesis One
Francis Collins's The Language of God

And as you do more research, I encourage you to pick the best examples. Don't let someone with a science degree interpret your Scripture and theology for you. Don't let someone who isn't a scientist interpret your science for you.

If I want to know about education, I'm going to ask Dennis. He's an expert on that topic.

If I want to know music theory, I'm going to ask Carrie or Vanessa. They are experts.

If I want to know if that lump on my arm is cancer or not, I'm going to talk to my doctor, not my grandma.

Choose your resources wisely...not usually on the internet.