

St Martins C3 – August 4, 2024

Navigating Gospel Conversations – Answering Big Questions

Sermon Summary:

Our aim in this series is to equip individuals with the confidence and knowledge to have gospel conversations with others and answer the big questions that are stumbling blocks to belief in God. Here are the next three questions:

Week Two: Why would I want to be a Christian when they all seem judgmental, hypocritical and miserable?

Week Three: If God is all-good and all-powerful why is there evil and suffering in the world?

Week Four: Who are you to say what is true?

May this series help answer questions you have and give you the confidence to help provide an answer when others have the same questions. May we always point to Jesus.

Part One: Answering the Question

Doesn't science explain the origin and operation of the world and mean there is no need for God?

This question paints a war of ideas. As a result, the modern reasonable person rejects a belief in God. Yet, the Christian answer to this question is that there is no conflict between science and faith. Science and faith are collaborators. Science points to questions that only faith can answer.

Science shows the Universe had a beginning. It is more logical to believe it came from an eternal God than from nothing.

Science reveals the intricate design of every living cell. It is more logical to believe the Universe had a designer than came from random chance.

Read Romans 1:20

If God created the Universe then miracles are easy for Him.

Part Two: Navigating a Gospel Conversation

Read 1 Peter 3:15

1 – Be Curious and Express Respect

The first thing we should do when talking about God is respectfully start a conversation with them. Curiously ask questions and treat their views with positive regard.

2 – Share your perspective with Gentleness

It's easy to win the argument but lose the person. That is why we need gentleness. Express your belief in God as an opportunity for them to consider a different perspective.

3 – Lead to Jesus

We all need to be ready to talk about the hope we have found in Jesus. We should always look for a way for our conversation to lead to a discussion about Jesus.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Connect Group Material:

Key Point

Science and faith work together. Gospel conversations are where we respectfully and gently point people to Jesus.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

What are some of the biggest questions that prevent people from believing in God?

How successful do you think would you be in answering those questions?

If someone were to say they didn't believe in God because there was no evidence, how would you respond?

Do you see Science and Faith as collaborators or in conflict? Why?

What do we do with the parts of our faith that seem to contradict science? (e.g. Genesis 1, miracles)

How do you feel about talking to others about God?

Look at the three guidelines for navigating a gospel conversation. Which of these do you find easiest, and which do you most need to work on? Discuss.

Monday Devotion: Sharing the Gospel

Read John 1:1-18

Today's Video (search for this in YouTube):

Renowned Scientist Explains WHY He Became A Christian

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF7LFXm-FrQ>

This week, we are going to look at the issues of science and faith, as well exploring how we can navigate a gospel conversation.

Each day we will also hear from Christian thinkers and scientists who compellingly explore this issue. At the top of each devotion, I will include the title of the video and the URL which you can click on or add to your browser. If you are interested in this topic I highly recommend these resources.

I have talked with several people about this topic of sharing their faith and I sense that sometimes people are reluctant to do so. Not because they don't think that others need it, but because they are concerned the conversation will not go well.

There are a few reasons people are reluctant to have a gospel conversation. One of the key areas of reluctance is that they are worried will not be able to give a good answer to the questions a non-believer has.

As you listen to Francis Collins (the director of the human genome project to first map DNA), hear how simply he explains his story and how faith and science work together and points towards the Word, who is Jesus.

Tuesday Devotion: God and Science

Read Psalm 111:1-4

Today's Video (search for this in YouTube):

God vs Science: Which explanation is correct? | John Lennox at SMU (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Goy2YJLFI-I>)

Many non-Christians often refuse to give the Christian faith an honest hearing because of the mistaken conviction that to become a Christian is to commit intellectual suicide. For them, Christianity is something akin to old-fashioned superstition, whereas they live in the realm of the "real world" which "deals with evidence, and cold hard facts."

As we have gospel conversations, we need to be aware that non-Christians fear for them to become a Christian they need to have unreasonable beliefs that contradict science.

Yet, the Bible encourages us to explore the world around us. Psalm 111:2 extols God's people to ponder the greatness of His works. This is an invitation to dig deeper into the world around us and see the beauty, complexity and order that God has created as well as wonder at His personal care.

As John Lennox shows in today's video, science and faith do not compete. They are both accurate but look at things from different perspectives and reinforce each other.

The more you embrace faith in God, the more you can appreciate the wonders of the world He has made and appreciate the glory of His works. Today, praise God for giving us scientific minds.

Wednesday Devotion: Two Questions

Read Colossians 1:15-23

Today's Video (search for this in YouTube):

Can This Man PROVE That God Exists? Piers Morgan vs Stephen Meyer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISUynYz93zY>)

One of the leading Intelligent Design proponents is Dr Stephen Meyer and he has worked on how Mathematically unlikely it is for humans to have developed by chance. The coding of DNA alone is so unlikely it is improbable to believe it could have happened without outside help.

Non-believers should consider the improbability of this world occurring by chance.

Science and Faith answer two related but distinct questions. How and why. Science tells us how the world works, it may even give us clues as to how it came together, but it cannot answer the why question. Why did those processes happen? Science cannot test or observe the why of the Universe.

Yet, the Bible tells us why we exist. Colossians 1 tells us that we exist because of the power of Christ in creating the world. Not only were we created by Him, but we were created for Him. He is our why.

Now we can know Him because of His work on the cross and the way He has reconciled us with God. We exist to be at peace with God and to know our creator. Reach out to Him today.

Thursday Devotion: God's Revelation

Read Romans 1:20; Psalm 8

Today's Video (search for this in YouTube):

Are Miracles Possible In Our Age Of Science? Josh McDowell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ofbl57WBy0>

The ability to answer the big questions of faith is called apologetics. It is helpful for every Christian to have some apologetic ability which is why we are doing this series. However, we also need to recognise the limitations of apologetics.

Apologetics cannot give faith. What it does tell us is that God is real and points the way to discovery through Jesus Christ. Apologetics gives truth and creates trust, but can only show a person to the door, it cannot make them enter. The apologist has the job of encouraging the individual to make this decision and take a step of faith, but the individual must make this decision.

One of God's greatest apologetic tools is the Universe. It shows the greatness of God. I remember once talking to someone who didn't believe in God but said, "The only thing that makes me wonder if there might be a God is the complexity of the world around me."

We can work from the existence of the world to show others the awesomeness, care, and creativity of God. We can even then show how stepping from a creator God to a God that can do the miraculous is only a small step.

Friday Devotion: Our Awesome God

Read Isaiah 40:12-31

Today's Video (search for this in YouTube):

The mind-blowing scale of The Milky Way

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsRmyY3Db1Y>)

During this week, I have pointed us towards videos with Christian scientists and thinkers who argue for the existence of God. This video is quite different. It is a 7-minute exploration of the size of our Universe.

We have an amazing God who made everything that we see and everything for us to discover in the vastness of space. From the sub-atomic particles to the vastness of the universe, God is in charge of it all.

The prophet Isaiah had a beautiful way of expressing the greatness of God. My favourite phrase is in verse 12, where it says he measured off the heavens with his fingers. This poetic language is there to let us know that God is greater than His creation.

We go through many difficulties in life. There are times when the world can be overwhelming. May watching this video and reading this scripture remind you that there is much more than our own little world.

We have a God who stands above it all and calls us to renew our strength in Him. What a privilege it is to know Him and to be in a relationship with Him through the power of Jesus.