5 Things You Can Do To Appreciate Science and Love the Bible

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This book is dedicated to my daughters, Olivia and Sophia.

May they continue to grow in their appreciation of their world and in their love for the Lord who created it.
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There is a famous quote often attributed to Satchel Paige or to Mark Twain: “It’s not what you don’t know that’ll hurt you. It’s what you know that just ain’t so.” Nothing could be truer when it comes to matters of science and Christianity. Much of the supposed conflict between God’s revelation in the Bible and our understanding of the universe through observation is a matter of presuppositions, or of believing things that aren’t necessarily so.

Suppose I enter my house after having been out for a few hours. I’m horrified to discover that my books have been thrown all over the floor, my TV has been turned over, and my clothes pulled out of my dresser. All that’s still in place are the walls, ceiling, and floor. I immediately think, Vengeful ghosts. There’s no other explanation.

But other possibilities might go through your mind. If you know I live in Houston, and you know how serious the problem of crime is in major urban areas, you might suspect this is the work of burglars. That it might have been ghosts probably didn’t cross your mind. Both of us were working off the same set of data: a ransacked house. But after observing that data, we drew different conclusions. Why?

Our explanations for things that happen are significantly influenced by our mental environment and by our worldview. A mental environment is a set of presuppositions that everyone in a culture or society works from. A worldview is
a personal or corporate commitment to a certain set of presuppositions. Some worldviews flow naturally from a mental environment. Some clash. We can choose our worldview, but not our mental environment.

The Christian worldview accepts the Scriptures as the Word of God. The Bible does not merely contain the Word of God; the Holy Spirit has spoken through the prophets, apostles, and evangelists in such a way that we are hearing not their thoughts but the thoughts of our Lord Himself. To understand the world and our place in it, Christians turn first to the Bible.

The non-Christian worldview is either modernist or postmodernist. Modernists accept some core principles through which they interpret the world and believe everyone else should accept the same core principles. Post-modernists may or may not have a set of core principles and are not convinced that their principles need to be held by anyone else.

Christians and non-Christians live in the same mental environment. That mental environment is one in which science reigns supreme. Scientific proof is the only evidence that counts. To win an argument in a mental environment like ours, quote a researcher, university laboratory, or think tank that supports your position.

How do we take our Christian worldview, which accepts the Bible as the final word on truth, out into a world where scientific study is the final word? We must

- be certain of our own worldview;
• know how to live with our worldview in our mental environment;
• understand how our worldview shapes our interpretation of facts; and
• know how to use our God-given intellect and our Spirit-restored reason to interpret the facts in light of Scripture.

Know Your Worldview

Why do we believe the Bible is the Word of God, and what do we mean when we say this? Can you explain why the Scriptures shape your personal worldview? Do you always interpret the world through the lens of God’s revelation? Can you show others that the Bible can be trusted as the Word of God? Peter wrote that Christians should be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you . . . with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Knowing your own worldview is an important place to start.

Jesus claimed to be the very Son of God. He claimed that He was the definitive revelation of who God is and what He is truly like. Jesus demonstrated the kind of relationship God wants with us by His own life and death. He backed up His teachings with signs and wonders. These signs, which we often refer to as “miracles,” point to Jesus’ reliability as a communicator of truths about
the world. In the Book of Job, God asks where Job was when the world was made (38:4). The answer is that only one being was there: God! So God is the only one who can give an accurate report of what happened at creation. Jesus’ miracles, especially His resurrection, attested to by numerous eyewitnesses, confirmed that He could speak authoritatively about all these things.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus confirmed the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, which we now call the Old Testament:

- He used the account of the creation of Adam and Eve to justify marriage as the union of one man and one woman for life (Mark 10:6–9).

- He accepted the account of Jonah’s three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish (Matthew 12:40).

- He accepted all of the Old Testament as the actual words of God—words about Jesus Himself (Luke 24:44).

Therefore, we, too, can accept the words of the Hebrew prophets and of Moses as the authoritative Word of God Himself.

In Matthew 10, Jesus warned His disciples about the future, but then also made an astonishing promise:

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues,
and you will be dragged before governors and kings for My sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. *For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* (vv. 17–20, emphasis added)

Jesus is stating that when His apostles, who traveled with Him from the beginning of His ministry, gave a witness to the Gospel, it was God Himself speaking through them. God inspired their words. So today, when we read the records of the apostles’ teachings contained in the New Testament, we are reading what God wants us to know about

- Himself;
- Jesus;
- our world’s origin and destiny; and
- salvation.

The words of the apostles, like Jesus’ words and the words in the Old Testament, are the Word of our God Himself.

To interpret the facts of our world correctly, the Scriptures should shape our worldview. God’s Word gives us everything we need to correctly understand the things we observe in the world.
Learn How Worldviews Affect Data Interpretation

We’ve all received e-mails or messages that seemed a little fishy. One of my colleagues in ministry is a pastor from Nigeria who is currently teaching in his homeland. I often ask him if he’s ever met one of the countless Nigerians who have inherited millions of dollars but needs an American to help him access it. He says no. The Web site snopes.com is dedicated to sorting truth from fiction on the Internet. Yet how often do we believe without a second thought e-mails that include statements by “prominent scientists” or declare the results of an “extensive study”?

As you read earlier, our interpretation of data depends on our presuppositions. A presupposition is something we accept as true. Scientists rarely start with an open-ended question, study data, then come to an unexpected conclusion. In fact, the scientific process demands that they have an idea of what might happen in an experiment. The first step in the standard scientific process is the formation of a hypothesis.

When a scientific “fact” seems to conflict with your worldview, ask what the presuppositions were in determining that fact.

Proving or disproving that hypothesis can have consequences to a scientist’s livelihood. The right answer can bring thousands, even millions, of grant money. The wrong answer can bring job loss. Although we would all like to believe that scientists remain objective,
the truth is that they often feel tremendous pressure to have the results of their studies or experiments go a certain way.

The Scriptures tell us that all humans are born with a tendency toward presupposition against belief in God. The Augsburg Confession states it plainly: “since the fall of Adam [Romans 5:12], all who are naturally born are born with sin [Psalm 51:5], that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God” (II 1). Is it any wonder, then, that non-Christian scientists are biased against finding evidence of a Creator? If scientists can be biased by mundane things like money or power, how much more can they be biased by their own sinful nature?

Every scientist considers scientific problems through the lens of his or her worldview, Christian or otherwise. This is especially true when we leave the realm of things we can observe and enter the realm of things that happened in the past, that may happen in the future, or that are beyond the range of our microscopes and telescopes. These are things we cannot observe directly, so we must infer what happened or is happening based on what we can observe.

Consider predictions about future events. No one has been to the future, so it cannot be observed scientifically. But based on past events that have been observed, we can apply scientific models to predict what might happen in the future. Such predictions are always tentative. The further into the future we try to predict, the less accurate our predictions can become. This is especially true as we account for a lot of variables, as weather and climate forecasters must do.
Final Thoughts

Take to heart Michael Crichton’s reminder that a majority of scientists can be wrong. No one knew until Einstein that nothing could travel faster than light. No one knew until the experiments of the early twentieth century that particles like photons behave like matter and energy. No one knew until just recently that our entire DNA, not just our genes, performs critical functions. If you see a scientific statement that seems to contradict the Scriptures, do some research! Someone, somewhere, has probably written about the problem and can point to an answer.

Key Points

- We interpret facts through the lens of our mental environment and our worldview. Christians want our scriptural worldview to shape our perceptions while recognizing that we live in a Western, “scientific” mental environment.

- Our society’s worldview has become less Christian and no longer accepts that there is a God who has revealed Himself to us in His Word. Many scientific models and theories, therefore, assume there is no God while attempting to explain what we observe.

- What we observe in the world does not directly contradict anything we read in Holy Scripture. Contradictions come from the models based on nonscriptural starting points.
Christians with a nonscience background can use basic principles to interpret the world in line with Scripture and to discern when they are reading something that is not a “fact” but simply one possible interpretation of the data.

Discussion Questions

1. Think about a scientific fact that seems to conflict with Scripture. Is it an actual fact or an interpretation of a fact? What presuppositions went into the interpretation? What presuppositions should a Christian use to interpret the fact?

2. What aspect of science or our modern worldview causes your faith to stumble the most? Why does it seem to go against Scripture? Have you asked someone knowledgeable on the topic if anyone else has asked the same question and resolved it?

Action Items

1. Ask your pastor to lead a Bible study on what the Scriptures say about themselves. Have him teach how to explain to a non-Christian that the Scriptures can be trusted as the Word of God.

2. Start a library in your church, or add to your existing church library. Include books that deal with science from a Christian worldview perspective. Some books to consider:
Werner Gitt, *In the Beginning was Information* (Master Books, 2006)
Ken Ham, *The New Answers Book 1, 2, and 3* (Master Books, 2011)
Joel Heck, *In the Beginning, God: Creation from God’s Perspective* (Concordia, 2011)
Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell* (HarperOne, 2009)
Various authors, Faith on the Edge series (Concordia, 2001–2005)

3. Arrange for a Christian scientist to speak in your congregation or area. Invite your friends and neighbors.