

Session 2: Faith and Science

Slide 1: Science is a Human Activity

Science is a human activity. God does not command how we are to do science. God does not command what we are to study. In fact, God does not command that we do science at all. God has, however, placed us into this world and has commanded that we take care of it and be good stewards. For us to fulfill this command, the study of God's Creation is implied.

Since people are sinful, any human activity is going to be flawed in tainted by sin. Science is no different. The history of science has shown time and again that what is accepted science today may be laughable tomorrow. But the issue goes deeper than just making mistakes or replacing old updated information with new. Since people are by nature enemies of God, it is in our nature to oppose God. Therefore it should be no surprise that the human endeavor we call science holds to ideas that contradict what God tells us in his Word.

Therefore when any human idea contradicts God's Holy Word, God's Word remains the authority. This theme does not apply only to science. When we teach any subject in the light of God's Word, we subject any matter to the authority of God's Word, keeping the good and pointing out the error.

Since science is a human endeavor, it is subject to change. All scientists, whether secular or creationists, will readily acknowledge that science does not produce absolute truth. Scientists readily admit that any scientific theory can be brought down with the discovery of new data or a better way of explaining an observation. At best, science can only support the current explanations. Science will never go so far as to say, "it is absolutely proven." The changeable nature of science precludes trying to find a verification for our faith or the Scriptures in the realm of science. This idea will be essential in session number six.

Slide 3: God Blesses Us Through Science

When Christians consider the role of science and how it corresponds to our faith, science is often viewed with a suspicious eye. It's almost as if the study of science is a necessary evil, and we somehow need to shelter our students from the perils that it presents.

Of course, science holds ideas that are contrary to God's word and we need to warn our students about those ideas. We find this true of all the subjects that we teach; it's part of teaching all subjects in the light of God's word.

However, we should also recognize that the Lord has richly blessed us through the study of science.

Consider the fact that God created a perfect Creation. What did God do with that perfect Creation? He didn't lock it away to be preserved for all time in eternity. Instead, He gave his Creation to His people to work it and care for it. What an amazing gift! God's gift is still ours today. God has placed us into his Creation, and his mandate to work in it and care for it still apply.

God has gifted us not merely to survive but expand our understanding of this Creation and to make use of it. God has blessed his people with the gifts and talents and abilities necessary to study and observe his Creation. To some He has given extraordinary ability to understand and explain His Creation, to the point of doing science as a profession. To some, he has given the gifts and skills to put that information

to use. The Lord actually allows his people the ability to make changes in his Creation and, in some cases, to manipulate his Creation.

Of course, since people are sinful, our ability to study and understand and explain even manipulate is going to be limited. We will never have a perfect understanding of God's Creation. The Lord has placed limits on what he will allow his children to accomplish in the realm of science.

But even though the human endeavor of science is flawed, and possibly even defiant toward God, God still chooses to bless us through this human activity. When we consider the benefits that we have reaped through our study of science, we should respond with gratitude and humility. The Lord has allowed us to alleviate much human suffering due to the study of medicine. Travel and communication are greatly enhanced by scientific breakthroughs. The list could continue indefinitely. God is indeed a gracious god.

Slide 4: Opportunities Offered

Rather than view science suspiciously, let's look at the opportunities that the study of science offers. Science is a unique field of study in that many other disciplines are involved or can be integrated with the study of science. The use of mathematics is a natural partner to science. Science strives to discover mathematical laws that describe our environment, so the integration of math will be natural. Science also relies heavily on measurement, which implies another useful relationship with mathematics.

Science always involves people. The connection between science and social studies is strong. People live in a political, economic, and social environment. By considering these factors, a deeper appreciation of science can be achieved. The historical or political climate can have a significant impact on where scientists concentrate their efforts. We have just experienced such a climate.

A significant aspect of science is communication. Science relies on the language arts. Much of science, and much of a scientist's work, occurs in an office or library where the scientist examines the latest research and keeps current on the latest findings. Another significant aspect of the scientist's work is communicating the results that he or she obtained. Students should also be encouraged and given the opportunity to communicate their findings.

Science allows students to unleash their creativity. The arts encourage creative thinking. Looking at a phenomenon in a new way or asking what-if questions can unlock whole new ways of observing the natural world. Students can actually become excited about science and when they are allowed the opportunity to be creative with it.

Science is all about solving problems. Students should be offered the opportunity to define and work out problems.

Perhaps the most significant opportunity that science offers is a natural way to incorporate the truths of God's word into a secular activity. Lutheran teachers are always looking for ways to integrate our faith into the material that we teach. Science offers many opportunities to integrate our faith.

We spoke earlier about how the Lord blesses us through science. The Lord also has given us a free will. God doesn't dictate exactly what to do in each and every situation. There are many times we have to struggle when questions of ethics arise. Many times we have to judge what is or is not a God-pleasing

use or application of a specific piece of scientific data or insight. Discussions such as these lead students deeper into the Scriptures in search of guidance.

Slide 5: Paradigms

The concept of that paradigm is key to understanding the nature and process of science. Science textbooks don't talk about paradigms or their significance. Most experts simply assume the standard paradigm of secular thought and reasoning.

The paradigm is a system of beliefs that we use to filter our experiences, sensory inputs, or information that we receive from the world around us. Maybe we could characterize paradigms as a set of preconceptions or points of view, but they amount to the same thing. Our paradigms greatly influence how we perceive the world.

I like the analogy of a paradigm to a lens. Those of us who need corrective lenses for good vision know how vital those lenses are. The lens does not alter the object we are looking at, but it certainly can change the way that we perceive it. In the same way, the paradigm we hold regarding any scientific theory can dramatically alter how we examine evidence or interpret observations.

What's important to realize is that the paradigm is always in place first, before the evidence or observations are analyzed or interpreted. Why do we believe in Creation? It's not because of something that I've observed in the world around me; it's a paradigm I hold under the faith given me by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when I observe the world around me, I look at it through the lens of Creation. When an Evolutionist looks at data or makes observations, he's filtering through the lens of Evolution.

We must be aware that data doesn't speak for itself. Every observation or set of data must be interpreted. The interpretation depends largely on the current paradigm that the interpreter holds. So whenever we hear a statement like, "the data is clear" or "it's obvious," we need to remember that within the perspective of the observer's paradigm, it may be accurate. We may very well arrive at a different conclusion if we hold a different paradigm.

The concept of the paradigm is essential when discussing evolution because the Evolutionist will point to mountains of data and conclude that the evidence is undeniable. I submit that the situation is reversed. The Evolutionist already accepts the Evolutionist paradigm and interprets the data through the lens of Evolution. He or she then uses this interpretation as evidence for evolution. You will no doubt see the circular reasoning. We Christians can look at the same data and draw a very different conclusion because we hold a very different paradigm. So, when considering the evidence for Evolution, all of science can be recruited as evidence of Evolution. This is one of the reasons why so many of our young people in public universities have a difficult time dealing with evolution. The science is sound, and nobody denies that. However, the Evolutionist oversteps when he projects his evolutionist views onto the data and then claims. Evolution is supported by evidence.

Slide 6: The Christian and Science

Will we Christians discover conflicts between science and Scripture? Absolutely! Any human endeavor is tainted by sin and will, therefore, conflict with God and His revealed Word. What we want is to make sure that God and His Word remain the highest authority, and all human endeavors, not just science, are subservient to it.

Scripture speaks about the natural knowledge of God. It should come as no surprise that our sinful nature will try to deny that knowledge. After all, if there is a God, that means that I am somehow accountable. Many find it easier to deny God rather than face the implications of His existence simply.

Slide 7: Do's and Don'ts When We Encounter Conflict

When science is studied, conflicts will arise. These conflicts are not limited to just Evolution. Science abounds with conflicts to Scripture. Acknowledge these conflicts. Instruct the students that when conflict arises, it is not Scripture that is somehow deficient or needs revising. Scripture still stands as our only source of absolute truth. Here is a great opportunity to apply our faith and to dig into God's Word for guidance.

I have mentioned the "don'ts" already. When conflicts arise, there is no need to validate Scripture. There is no need to make Scripture more reasonable so that the conflict disappears. Scripture always stands on its own. Where conflict arises, science must bow in submission, no matter how unreasonable Scripture may seem.