Discussion Questions Included

SCIENCE & FAITH

STUDENT QUESTIONS EXPLORED

Edited by

Hannah Eagleson

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HENDRICKSON ACADEMIC

Science and Faith: Student Questions Explored

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To Thomas Grosh IV, former Associate Director of InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network and now Area Director of Christian Medical and Dental Association in South Central Pennsylvania, and Don Paul Gross, InterVarsity Graduate and Faculty Ministries South Central Regional Ministries Director, who have done so much to support this project and broader conversations on faith and science.

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Foreword

I first fell in love with science as a child while looking at the moon, stars, and planets through my dad's telescope in our backyard in the Pacific Northwest. Since then, I've continued to pursue science professionally as an aerospace researcher, corporate astronaut, and college professor. I also serve as executive director of the American Scientific Affiliation, a professional society for Christians in the sciences. I'm delighted that you are gathering with others to study and discuss faith and science issues! This is a necessary endeavor for those of us with inquisitive and analytical minds who seek to reconcile Christianity's claims of truth with the evidence from science. I'd like to share some words of encouragement with those who are using this study guide.

I urge you to genuinely contemplate the ways faith and science can productively inform each other. In my own experience, I find great fulfillment in working as both a science professional and educator. These roles afford me opportunities to learn more as I encounter the vastness, beauty, and intricate synergies of creation. If you find yourself drawn to the sciences, I pray that this study will be an opportunity for you to further explore that calling.

Alternatively, perhaps you are a believer interested in learning more about faith and science, and in that case I'm glad that you're participating in this conversation as well. In a time and place where science provides so much of both the intellectual and physical infrastructure of our everyday experience, it's important that Christians in all vocations grow in their understanding of how science and Christian faith engage each other.

Perhaps you're not sure what you think about Christianity, but you're interested in learning about what faith and science have to say to one another. Welcome! I hope this study will be a chance for

you to marvel at the wondrous workings of nature, to hear from thoughtful believers, and to grow in your own exploration of the questions raised by both science and faith.

If you are a small group leader, perhaps at a church or in a college or university setting, thank you for leading this study. So many of the most important discoveries we make about our beliefs take place in conversation. I hope leading a study group through this guide will be a rich and joyful experience for you.

Coming full circle from looking through my dad's telescope as a kid, one of my favorite things to do with my students is to go outside on a clear, starry night and gaze at the heavens. Inspired by the beauty of the night sky, the vast expanse of the universe, and the sheer numbers of galaxies, stars, and possible other worlds, someone inevitably wonders out loud about life's big questions: "Where did all this come from?" "Is there anyone else out there?" "Why are we here?" All these questions are great starting points for deep discussions of both science and faith.

Whatever your background or interest in science and faith issues, by taking time to meet and discuss them, you are embarking on a great adventure to learn from the wisdom of faith and the experimentation of science. I wish you all the best in this important endeavor.

LESLIE WICKMAN

Leslie ("Rocket Girl") Wickman is an internationally respected research scientist, engineering consultant, author, and speaker. For more than a decade, she was an engineer for Lockheed Martin Missiles and Space, where she worked on NASA's Hubble Space Telescope and International Space Station programs, receiving commendations from NASA for her contributions and being designated as Lockheed's Corporate Astronaut (hence the nickname "Rocket Girl"). She now divides her time between serving as the Executive Director of the ASA and as a professor of engineering at California Baptist University. She also works as a research scientist on technical and policy aspects of national aerospace and defense issues. She holds a master's degree in aeronautical and astronautical engineering and a doctorate in human factors and biomechanics, both from Stanford University.

How to Use This Book

This book is designed to make it easy to lead a small group discussion on faith and science. We crafted it primarily for Christians and especially with young adults in mind, but we welcome anyone who is interested in learning about Christian faith and science, whatever your age or beliefs may be. Our main goal is to provide an easy-to-use study guide that explores some key questions about faith and science, and makes it easier to launch a small group discussing these topics.

I help to lead InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network, a digital network supporting Christian academics in their callings and work for the common good across the fifteen-year arc of their early careers. In 2016, aided by a generous grant from Fuller Seminary's program Science and Theology for Emerging Adult Ministries (STEAM), we decided to create this curriculum on our blog and then revise it into book form.

In conversation with a colleague who is a leader in InterVarsity graduate ministry, we realized that many ministries want to provide opportunities to explore questions relating to faith and science, but feel daunted. The world is full of excellent books on faith and science, but there are few easy-to-use study guides for small group discussion on the topic. This guide is designed to be approachable. We built it around student questions, commissioned experts to address them in a thoughtful and accessible way, and provided discussion questions to launch small group conversation. Our hope is that you can use *Science and Faith* to help begin or strengthen a faith/science small group in your own community, whether you're a science PhD, a ministry leader, or an interested layperson.

How We Designed This Book

I'm excited about this book for several reasons:

1. It's built around actual questions and small group experiences shared with us by students and campus ministry leaders.

In my role as editor for InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network (ESN), I frequently find myself trying to figure out what our 4,000+ members actually want to know about a topic. Thanks to a collaboration with my colleagues at InterVarsity and the generous grant from Fuller Seminary's STEAM project, we were able to work with local small groups of graduate students and campus ministers to figure out what their questions about science and faith were. Then we asked thoughtful Christians in science and theology to write articles exploring possible answers to the questions that received the most interest from group participants (or in some cases composite questions based on interests expressed by members of the groups).

2. It's field-tested.

The campus small groups read through the first batch of articles we published at the ESN blog and gave us tips on what made for a helpful article. As a result, every piece in this book has been refined in light of feedback from students and/or campus ministers.

3. It features thoughtful authors from a range of scientific specialties and experiences, modeling different ways to be a faithful Christian in science (or in some cases disciplines in the humanities related to science).

The authors represented here come from a range of disciplines, including biology, physics, engineering, theology, philosophy, and history of science. They come from varied career points and callings, and they write in a variety of styles. One of our goals in pro-

ducing this book is to share different models of faithful engagement with science, in the hope that as many readers as possible will find models that work for them. We're proud to present the work of a number of scientists who embody different and complementary ways of following Jesus in science and related disciplines.

Using This Book

Our desire is that this book will be useful to many small groups in churches, campus ministries, Christian colleges, seminaries, and beyond. We designed it in collaboration with InterVarsity graduate student groups at secular universities, and we hope it supports discussions in that setting and well beyond it.

This book should work well in multiple small group formats, from busy graduate students meeting for an hour over lunch once a month, to longer weekly evening discussions in a church group, to discussion segments in a seminary or college class.

Testing indicated that most groups preferred to have three to five discussion questions to explore. Where thoughtful authors provided us with more, we have divided them into "Key Questions" and "Additional Questions." Those with shorter discussion times may wish to stick to the key questions, while others can use the additional questions as a helpful resource.

How This Book Is Structured

We've structured this book especially to create a good small group discussion experience, and in general we start with more approachable topics and build toward more challenging ones. The goal is that a group has time to form rapport and a foundation of faith/science engagement while working toward the difficult articles and issues. Of course, what each person considers challenging will vary, and some pieces addressing harder ideas are still approachable, so this is a general goal rather than an exact description of each individual piece.

PART ONE: GETTING STARTED

With that in mind, we've begun with a "Getting Started" section of relatively approachable articles designed to 1) engage readers in thinking through their own questions and building a group dynamic where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and exploring ideas, 2) provide a positive framework for discussing faith and science issues that is open to difficult questions, and 3) offer some initial philosophical and experiential explorations of how Christian faith and science can productively engage with each other.

PART TWO: BUILDING A GOOD CONVERSATION AMONG SCIENTISTS ABOUT FAITH

We anticipate that many readers will be Christians who are scientists working in secular settings, and seeking to craft good conversations with colleagues about faith and science. Our second section is called "Science and Faith: Building a Good Conversation among Scientists." Here we offer a reflection on positive interactions between science and faith, explorations of a few common objections Christians in science sometimes hear, and a closing piece on talking about faith with secular colleagues from Princeton physics researcher Bob Kaita.

PART THREE: BUILDING A GOOD CONVERSATION AMONG CHRISTIANS ABOUT ORIGINS

The third section turns to the question of origins, an issue which has often generated debate among Christians. After much prayer, discussion, and consideration, we decided to present an article offering some principles for addressing origins questions well, followed by two articles giving a general survey of different views Christians hold on both general and human evolution. Our goal in this study guide is not to convince readers of any particular view, but to make clear the range of Christian opinions on the topic

and create an environment for friendly conversation with the goal of understanding what each member of the group thinks. (Some of the individual authors express their own views on origins and other complex topics in various parts of this book, and we hope their individual thoughts will be helpful to you).

We have placed the origins discussion third in this book for two reasons. One reason is that we feel the world of faith/science exploration is much larger than just the origins question, and we wanted to start with the broader context of various productive faith and science conversations. Also, we felt it would be better to address this controversial and complex question after a group rapport is developed and people are more comfortable exploring areas of potential disagreement.

PART FOUR: EXPLORING FURTHER WITHIN SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Finally, the fourth section addresses further areas of exploration for Christian communities interested in science. A significant number of our testers indicated interest in material addressing the history and philosophy of science. To some extent, that is woven in throughout the book, but it especially features in this section. Most of the pieces include some reflection on philosophers and historians of science and how they can help us in contextualizing science for Christian communities today, and the section concludes with a substantial series exploring the history of science and Christianity. Here we start with a thoughtful piece by engineering professor Royce Francis on how Christians in science can encourage science literacy among believers. Author and editor Jim Stump shares his expertise with us in the next piece, addressing a few starting points for Christians thinking about epistemology and science. The final part of this section is a three-part series by historian of science James Ungureanu, who explores the question, "How Can the History of Science Encourage the Church?" These pieces are impressively concise given how thoughtfully James covers 2000 years of church history. However, they are longer than usual because of the

amount of material, so you may want to allow some extra time for reading and discussing them, or read them ahead of time if your particular group usually reads the articles on the spot.

That concludes a brief tour of this study guide and its uses. Of course, some groups may find it helpful to proceed in a different order or to use just one section of the book. For instance, a group especially interested in origins might start with section 3, or a group might choose to pick the five pieces that best fit group members' interests and start there. However you use this book, we hope that you will find it helpful, and we'd love to hear from you!

HANNAH EAGLESON

Hannah Eagleson is Interim Associate Director of InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network (ESN), and previously served as a writer/editor on staff with ESN. With the support of then ESN Associate Director Thomas Grosh IV, she coordinated the project which produced this book and edited the individual pieces and the volume as a whole, which was funded by a generous grant from the STEAM project at Fuller Seminary. As part of the same grant project, Hannah facilitated a collaboration between InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network and the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) to launch a new student track at the ASA annual faith/science conference. Hannah also edits ESN's collaboratively written online devotional for academics, *Scholar's Compass*. She holds a PhD in English literature from the University of Delaware, and an MA from St. John's College in Annapolis, MD. She's working on a novel about a dragon who gave up fending off knights to become a tea importer in eighteenth-century England.

Acknowledgments

This study guide is truly the work of many hands, and we want to thank the generous people and institutions who brought it into being, with God's grace.

This project was made possible through the support of an award from the Science and Theology for Emerging Adult Ministries (STEAM) project at Fuller Theological Seminary. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Fuller or the STEAM project.

Previous versions of the articles in this book were published at InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network Blog and can be read at this link: https://blog.emergingscholars.org/tag/steam-grant-series/.

We are deeply grateful for the support of the STEAM project, which truly made this book possible. We are also appreciative of the generosity and effort the STEAM project leaders and administrators put into supporting us through the project, especially Greg Cootsona, Rebecca Sok, Sarey Martin, and Tyler Greenway.

InterVarsity colleagues have also played an important role in crafting this book and the wider STEAM project. Profound thanks are due to many colleagues, including Deb Clark, Bob Clark, Bobby Gross, Peter Luisi-Mills, and Katie Linn, all of whom assisted the project with logistical support at key moments. Tom Grosh IV, Associate Director of Emerging Scholars Network, has supported *Science and Faith* with unflagging enthusiasm as a member of the grant core team and the leader of InterVarsity's Emerging Scholars Network. Don Paul Gross, South Central Regional Ministries Director of InterVarsity's Graduate and Faculty Ministries (GFM), gave us the idea to build a faith/science curriculum in the first place, served as an official advisor, and helped connect us to local groups

eager to test our material. Lorrey Thabet, Director of Operations for GFM, gave incredible amounts of time and energy to pull off a number of necessary negotiations and practicalities; we are incredibly grateful for her amazing support. Our colleagues Nathan Fields, Stephanie Holmer, Michael Moriarty, and Wendy Quay all facilitated local groups to test the material, and the book is much richer for their feedback and that of the groups they led.

We are also incredibly thankful to the graduate students, volunteers, and faculty members in the InterVarsity network who have so generously encouraged and advised this project along the way. Professors Jeff Hardin, Johnny Wei-Bing Lin, S. Joshua Swamidass, and David Vosburg served as official advisors to the project, and we are deeply grateful for their sage advice. Dr. Lin and Dr. Swamidass also generously gave considerable time to supporting our grant application before the project had even begun. Josiah Lewis and Joshua Ho served as official graduate student advisors to the project, and this book is stronger because of their participation.

Many thanks are also due to the members of the InterVarsity graduate faith/science small groups at Duke, Georgia Tech, Vanderbilt, and Stanford, who shared questions, tested the material, and provided feedback. This book is built on the foundation of their questions and ideas. As a graduate student at Vanderbilt, Ciara Reyes led one of the small groups testing the material. InterVarsity volunteer Mayo Adigun and Stanford grad student Andreas Ralf Krischok led a small group and generously gave feedback on material in progress. Mark Bearden also provided volunteer support and contributed questions. Graduate students Soyoung Kim and Daisy Hikari Green and Duke researcher Kelly Seaton also supported the project with advice and feedback at key moments. The readers of the Emerging Scholars Network blog have also encouraged us through their engagement with this faith/science series at the blog, in both visits and comments.

It's been a great pleasure to work with all the writers who have so graciously given their time and energy to writing this series for online presentation and then to revising it to make *Science and Faith* even stronger in light of student feedback. I am profoundly

grateful for their patience, grace, and thoughtfulness in the process of preparing this manuscript.

Hendrickson Publishers has also been a pleasure to work with throughout the process. Many thanks are due to editor Carl Nellis, who ably shepherded us through the first part of the process; to Patricia Anders for her leadership of the editorial team; to Maggie Swofford and Sarah Welch for their editing talent and attention; and to Paul Hendrickson, who generously encouraged the project and helped us accomplish key administrative details.

The American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), a professional society for Christians in science, has partnered with us on various aspects of our STEAM grant, and we are deeply grateful to their staff and networks for support along the way.

On a personal note, I would also like to thank the friends and family members who encouraged me throughout the project. As always, you have been amazing in your generosity.

PART ONE

Getting Started

CHAPTER 1

Sharing My Questions about Faith and Science

Joshua Ho

Since this book is designed to help readers explore faith and science questions in small group conversation, we thought it would be helpful to start with the reflections of a graduate student sharing some of the questions that have been most important to understanding his own vocation in science so far. Joshua Ho, one of the student advisors to this project, describes some of his own ongoing questions in a letter to readers, and talks about a few ideas and resources he has found helpful as he continues to explore these questions over time. We hope reading about the questions Josh wrestles with will encourage participants to share their own questions.

Dear Reader,

I'm a senior graduate student studying Developmental Biology. Throughout my life I've always had an interest in the mechanisms by which our bodies are formed. Grad school is an incredible time for any aspiring academic; it is a time to learn and grow your mind and who you are. The journey has definitely had its highs and lows, but in the midst of all of the frenetic chaos I am still seeking to find God in everything I do. Throughout my journey in grad school, I've faced a number of internal and external questions that I've been learning to navigate. One of the biggest questions has been how to reconcile differing narratives. I'll highlight three topics and questions over which I've had to navigate what may be conflicting narratives and find reconciliation and resolution. The first two will

be broader topics that impact everyone, but I'll address specific nuances found in science as a vocation; and the last topic is a specific question in the vocation of science that's near to my heart.

Big Picture Question 1: Where Do I Derive My Identity from and What Determines My Worth?

One question that has always been hovering over my shoulder strikes at the heart: "Who am I? What are the things that define me?" Clearly my scientific work and interests are important parts of my identity, but I also derive much of my life from more than my dissertation work. I have had to reflect on whether or not my works and interests are manifestations of a deeper part of me (a curious nature and a desire to learn more about life), or if they are external entities that force me into specific molds regarding how I behave and think (carefully controlled experimentation and an inherent skepticism regarding most if not all claims). I'm coming to the conclusion that my identity is both something that wells up from my internal self and something shaped by the training I'm undergoing that is sharpening who I am.

Closely related to my own journey regarding my self-identity is the journey this question has taken me on: "Who or what defines my worth?" Despite all of the interests, knowledge, and skills I have developed here in grad school, I still have yet to publish a paper. Though this is a hurdle that must be overcome for me to proceed onto the next stage of my career, self-doubt readily inserts itself into my mind and makes me question my own individual worth. There are days where I feel that it would be better for me to quit my dissertation work and do something else, but I also know that what I'm trying to accomplish is not achievable in a short period of time. I cannot derive my worth from my accomplishments (or lack thereof). Rather, my worth must be derived from something even deeper and more abiding than the uncertainty of being published or getting the next promotion.

Big Picture Question 2: What Is My Mission? What Is God's Call in My Life?

This question is one that, while not unique to graduate students, is especially felt by graduate students: "Where do we apply the knowledge that we have accrued to our work for the kingdom of God? In the halls of academia? In an industry niche where we can craft something specific? Will we use our knowledge in the government for the improvement of our fellow humans' lives?" The list goes on and on. How do we discern between the various options and choose a path forward? Ultimately we need to continually seek God's call by examining what God is transforming internally within us and externally in the world around us. As believers we are not only called to follow God in our own private lives, but we are called to be agents of the kingdom of God within the church and in our professional careers. An excellent resource I've found regarding this perpetual question is *The Call* by Os Guinness,[1] a book I highly recommend for personal and group study.

As I seek to not only finish my degree but also discern where I want to go next, this question weighs heavily on my mind. Confounding this search for my specific calling is also my struggle with worth and identity. Often we tie our identities and worth to our careers and career trajectories. But I must continue to step forward in faith after weighing my options and seeking God's guidance and call, with the realization that this is a question that may never be answered.

Big Picture Question 3: How Should I Approach Evolution and Creation?

There's no avoiding the proverbial elephant in the room as a biologist in training: evolution and faith. I'm not going to dive into this particular debate/dialogue and hash out the rationale of either side (which some of the following articles will explore). Instead, I will acknowledge that I stand at the intersection between two

communities who often have very harsh and dismissive words regarding the other. For this topic, I've personally come to the point where I synthesize both narratives. This position comes from my own reflection and meditation on both my field and the truth in the Bible. In developmental biology, the evidence for evolution is clear to me in the molecular pathways that direct and control the differentiation of a zygote into all the varied cells that comprise each multicellular organism. As a principle, all of these pathways are dependent upon 1) the timing of a signal, 2) the strength of the signal, and 3) the receiving cell's identity. One such pathway is the Wnt (pronounced "Wint," like "mint") signaling pathway, which was originally identified in non-human organisms (fruit flies and mice). This particular pathway is a multifunctional tool that controls many things, including axial polarity in an embryo, cell proliferation, and maintaining cell fates or triggering cell fate changes. In humans, the core components of this pathway behave in the exact same manner their homologs do in other species, and the proteins (and the DNA coding for these proteins) are similar to one another across different species. It is the similarity of both function and identity across multiple species that provides strong evidence for the hypothesis of common descent. This strength of evidence for evolution does not challenge my faith, but rather deepens my wonder and worship of God. I take on this worshipful stance from a reflection on Psalm 139:13–14, where David makes the theological claims that we are formed in our mother's womb by God and acknowledges that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. For me, knowing the molecular pathways of development point to evolution does not contradict the ultimate fact that we are made by God. Rather, the beauty, complexity, and timing of all of these mechanisms should inspire the worship of the author of such processes. This angle of approach leads me to believe that such an apparent "contradiction" is a trivial matter when we put things in the larger context: that the God of the universe is the same author of these molecular pathways and that they are merely the mechanisms of how God makes us.

These are just some of the questions that I'm still wrestling with in some form or another. I'm not sure when or if I will resolve these questions; they may be things I will ponder for years to come. However, I'm firm in my belief that I'm not alone in experiencing these questions (in some alternate form or another) and I hope that my writing them down will prompt further dialogue and become a resource for other students.

OPTIONAL GROUP EXERCISE

Since this letter is designed to be a springboard to thinking through one's own questions and many groups may read it before their first meeting, we've provided an optional exercise to help identify the specific questions its members may have. We hope this will prove helpful in starting conversation and/or learning about each other's interests. However, feel free to skip it and go straight to the discussion questions.

1. Take a few moments to jot down or describe to a neighbor one or two questions you have about faith and science.

2. If you feel comfortable, share your question(s) with the whole group, and briefly describe where you are with that question. Have you just started exploring it? Is it something you've studied for many years and feel you are close to having a personal answer to? Or are you somewhere in between? For now, the group should listen to each member in turn without disagreeing or trying to answer their questions. There will be time to explore details, possible answers, and various views later; at this point the goal is just to establish respectful conversation and learn what everyone is thinking about.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What questions do others most often ask you about faith and science? How do you usually answer them? Which questions from others about faith and science seem easy for you to answer? Which ones seem harder?

2. Can you name one or two things that have helped you explore faith/science questions in the past? (Answers may include reading about it, talking with people, observing patterns over time, etc.)

3. The author mentions that as a biologist, the relationship between evolution and faith is one of the big questions that his field is intimately connected to. Do you think that the details of your scientific field raise certain questions about faith and science? Or is it less about the details of your particular discipline and more about other questions?

4. What are some questions you hope to explore in this study group?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joshua Ho received his BA in Biology from Vanderbilt University and is currently a PhD Candidate at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri (WUSTL). His graduate work is focused on changes to the cell cycle during miRNA-mediated reprogramming of fibroblasts into neurons. He has been continually involved with InterVarsity starting during his undergraduate career and more recently has helped with coordinating Faithful Scholars, a faith/work integration talk hosted by Graduate Christian Fellowship at WUSTL that features both graduate students and faculty as they see how their faith and work integrate together. Outside of the lab, he loves to spend his time cooking and he enjoys playing viola as part of his church's worship team.