



[Show Slide 1] For the next three weeks, we are going to wrestle with questions around origins, creation, and the beginning of mankind. What is the answer to the ultimate question, the question of life, the universe, and everything? It's an area where the church in general has not had a great track record. Some churches avoid it all together, other churches say you must believe exactly what they believe or you're not a good Christian.

[Show Slide 2] Dr. Andrew Root, a Christian theologian and youth ministry expert, wrote: **“If we’re honest with ourselves, keeping faith and science apart is impossible, and both approaches are unhelpful to our young people.”**ⁱ

Here's the thing: one of the major reasons young people leave the faith when they enter college is the issue of faith and scienceⁱⁱ; they grew up being taught they had to believe a certain way, or else they were rejecting God. They go off to college and hear compelling arguments for things they were told were against God, and agree with them, so they find themselves thinking, I guess I can't follow God.

I want to suggest something today; I don't think we ask the right questions when it comes to faith and science and the Bible. Are faith and science really in opposition? Does choosing faith really mean rejecting science? I don't think so.

[Show Slide 3] I'm calling today's lesson **“The Ultimate Question.”** There is a hilarious British science fiction book called, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. In the book, there is an alien race that wanted to know the answer to life, the universe and everything, so they designed the most powerful computer in the universe to find the answer. The computer, named Deep Thought, tells them it will take seven and a half million years to answer. Finally, after millions of years, the day arrived for them to finally get the answer to the ultimate question, but before giving it, Deep Thought warns them they won't like it. They demand he give it to them, so after a long pause, he says:

[Show Slide 4];

“Forty-two,” said Deep Thought, with infinite majesty and calm.

It was a long long time before anyone spoke.

“It was a tough assignment,” said Deep Thought mildly.

“Forty-two!” yelled Loonquawl. “Is that all you’ve got to show for seven and a half million years’ work?”

“I checked it very thoroughly,” said the computer, “and that quite definitely is the answer. I think the problem, to be quite honest with you, is that you’ve never actually known what the question is.”

“But it was the Great Question! The Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe and Everything,” howled Loonquawl.

“Yes,” said Deep Thought with the air of one who suffers fools gladly, “but what actually is it?”

A slow stupefied silence crept over the men as they stared at the computer and then at each other.

“Well, you know, it’s just Everything . . . everything . . .” offered Phouchg weakly.

“Exactly!” said Deep Thought. “So once you do know what the question actually is, you’ll know what the answer means.”ⁱⁱⁱ

I love the idea that they didn't know the question for the answer they were given. Similarly, when we talk about the topic of origins, of science and faith, we can find ourselves asking the wrong questions. These passages of Scripture were written 3500 years ago, in an ancient culture and language, with a far different set of values and ways of looking at the world than we have today. It is dangerous to assume what was written then was intended to answer the science-related questions we ask today.

[Show Slide 5] **2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT) “All Scripture is inspired by God.”**

I absolutely believe what Paul wrote to Timothy. Yet, some look at Scripture and find what they believe are contradictions and errors when it comes to this topic. God’s inspiration is perfect, given for what He wants us to know. If there are challenges in interpretation, that is because of our imperfect, limited perspectives. Our culture, our perspective, and our bias, can all lead us astray when interpreting Scripture.

[Show Slide 6] An important piece to finding the question that Scripture is answering is understanding the different genres, or writing styles, that the Bible was written in.^{iv} An obvious one is **Historical**. But there are actually quite a few more:

The **Law** was a genre focused on giving instruction in following and worshipping God; not speeding tickets and shoplifting like we may think of the word “law” today. And then there’s also **Wisdom literature**, **Psalms** (or songs and poetry), **Prophecy**, **Apocalyptic** (books like Revelation), the **Gospels**, and the **Epistles**, or the letters in the New Testament, like 2 Timothy.

[Show Slide 7] There are so many writing styles found in the Bible; do you see what's missing? **Science**. The Bible was never intended to be a scientific textbook. God’s goal was not to explain the mechanics of the universe. The genres used in the Scriptures all shared one purpose, to paint the narrative of how a broken, sinful people can be reunited with God.

Why is this a big deal? Let me show you an example of something that has caused problems for people:

[Show Slide 8] *Genesis 1:6-8 (NIV) ⁶ And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.*

Older translations tend to use words like “vault” and “firmament.” One translation even uses the word “dome,” creating a word picture that God created a dome to separate the ocean of water in the sky from the water below. In the ancient Hebrew, they understood it as a hard surface holding up water above the Earth. Now, we’ve been to space. There is no dome holding up water above the Earth. Yet it’s a reoccurring theme. Genesis 7:11, writing about when the flood happens, also mentions this water above;

[Show Slide 9] *Genesis 7:11 (NIV) In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.*

People have tried to create theories to explain how there was an ocean of water above the sky thousands of years ago that is no longer there because it’s mentioned here in the Bible. The theory I was taught when I was a teen was that when the flood happened, the water came down and



- What stood out to you from this lesson?
- What made sense from today? What do you wish you knew more about or need more information about?
- What does it mean to be in the image of God? Why do you think the phrase is repeated so many times in Genesis 1?
- What do you think about the different orders of creation in the first two chapters of Genesis? How do you explain the differences?
- Is it possible for us to know all the answers regarding the Bible? Why or why not?
- Madeleine L'Engle's wrote, "I don't understand it any more than you do, but one thing I've learned is that you don't have to understand things for them to be." What do you think of her quote? Is she right? Why or why not?
- One possible interpretation of Genesis 2 is that it is describing priestly duties for Adam and Eve. Why is that important? What does it tell us about men and women?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; what do we learn about Jesus and Adam's priestly roles?
- How do you balance faith and science? Is it possible? Why or why not?

LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

Week Two | Don't Panic

2 Timothy 3:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Major Theories of Origins:

- Intelligent Design
- Young Earth Creationism
- Old Earth Creationism
- Evolution

Passages referenced: Genesis 1:1-5, 14-19, 2:1-3

- GENESIS ONE IS _____ COSMOLOGY
- MATERIAL ORIGINS WERE _____
- _____ WAS THE FOCUS
- ANCIENT READERS WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD THIS AS DESCRIBING A _____
- SCRIPTURE POINTS US TO _____ AND _____

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