

Week 2 Isn't Science Enough

February 28



Hey, everyone!

As you know at this point, we are in a series called “You Asked For It” where we are dissecting some of life’s most important questions. Last week we dug around and gleaned some insight into the question of our existence. We asked, “Why are we here?” and we were able to find some good biblical resources to help us go down that road maybe a little further than we were before.

This week, we’re asking a different question, one I’ve heard tossed about quite a bit: “Isn’t science enough?”

When I was in high school I really struggled with this question. In retrospect, naturalistic materialism (the idea that the only thing that exists is matter and that the only way to explain the world is through natural, physical laws) was the water I swam in throughout high school. And it seemed to me to be fairly convincing.

So upon initial inspection, that question seems to carry a lot of weight. If I can’t see it, taste it, smell it, hear it, or touch it, why should I believe it? Or...at the very least, we can’t *know* with any certainty that something with no material evidence exists, right? It’s a tricky question, and one I often find myself wrestling with.

Until I consider that question a little deeper. If the question is, “Is science enough?” then my follow-up is, “Enough to do *what* exactly?”

There are some things that science is really good at. There are other things science is not so great at. When I began considering how bleak a picture of human life “just science” really paints (and how limited that worldview tends to be), I began to see that science is indeed *not* enough. Here are a few examples of what science cannot do...

1. For starters, in a purely naturalist materialist scientific worldview, justice and morals do not exist. There isn’t anything *objectively* right or wrong in the world. It’s all emotivism. At the end of the day, we can only ever say, “That’s wrong...because I say so!”

2. Additionally, in a purely naturalist materialist scientific worldview, ideals such as hope and love do not exist. You can think that you're in love or that there's hope just around the corner, but really all that you're experiencing when in love or when feeling hopeful is a chemical reaction in your brain. It's all manufactured. Cupid's arrow doesn't exist.
3. Lastly—and bear with me here—one thing that really got me thinking about how a naturalist materialist scientific worldview isn't enough is when I realized science only provides **one layer** of knowledge that I need to make sense of my world. Science can tell me what exists in the physical world, and may even make sound arguments about how things got to be the way they are today, but I actually need a lot more information than that to make *sense* of everything around me.

I've realized that we *map meaning* onto our world everywhere we look. For example, when we look at our cars, why do we not just see a random conglomeration of metal and plastic parts screwed together? When we look, *we see a coherent whole*. We see a car. And we don't just see the object in and of itself. We see a device to get us from A to B. We see the *car's function*. Science doesn't tell us any of that, and yet we need those levels of meaning to make sense of our world.

So, is science enough? I don't think so. It's mighty helpful and mighty wonderful when science does *what it is intended to do*—which is provide insight into what makes up our physical universe and how our physical universe operates. But we need more than *just* science for the “whys” of life, for morality, for an explanation of consciousness, for meaning, for purpose, and for more.

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks remarks, “Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean.”

I'm not sure where you're at with a question like the one posed above. Like I shared last week, it's always helpful for me to externalize my thoughts on a piece of paper. This week (or even right now), I'd invite you to really prayerfully consider your answer to the question, “Is science enough?” Maybe ask yourself questions like the ones from last week. Maybe ask...

- What are my thoughts about the question “Is science enough?”
- How does even thinking about that question make me feel?
- Have I wrestled with it before? When?
- How would I answer that question if someone asked me?
- How does my answer to that question impact my everyday living?
- What good things does science bring to our world? What good things does religion bring to our world? What good things has each of these brought to me personally?
- What does religion provide me that science cannot?

Write your thoughts out. Figure out your answer, even if your answer is a little scary to think about. That's okay. God isn't surprised by your answer.

Sometimes I still find myself wondering if there is more to life than simply our physical, material universe. If I'm being honest, there are days when I'm tempted to think that all that exists is matter, and therefore, *nothing* matters.

But, for the reasons above, and for many more, I continue to exercise faith. Faith isn't opposed to reason or science. Faith is what I choose to do in light of reason and science. My reason tells me there's more to life than just physical material. Faith is the muscle I exercise when life *feels* like nothing matters; and faith is the virtue that I cling to when I'm in the middle of doubt.

I don't know where you're at personally with a question like the one above, but I want to share a few verses and resources for you to look at this week as you wrestle with this question yourself and alongside those in your life group.

Here are some resources I've found helpful:

1. Scripture passages like **Genesis 1-2; Psalm 19:1; Psalm 111:2; Job 38:4-30; Isaiah 40; Romans 1:19-20; Colossians 1:15-20.**
2. A talk given by pastor/author Timothy Keller at Google that delves into reasons for faith that science cannot really provide answers for. You can watch the talk and Q/A session here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ulvOniW8xA&t=109s>
3. The book *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. Lewis was an Oxford University professor and nonbeliever himself until he began examining faith and religion. You can read the **first chapter** of that book here online (which I'd highly recommend!): https://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/readings/lewis_rightandwrong.pdf
4. A 10-minute video foray into the life of Christian scientist Francis Collins. Collins is a physicist-geneticist who led the Human Genome Project. In his mind, faith and science work together in harmony. They're not at war. Here's the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYvi8gwp7Og&t=5s>
5. A conversation between Christian thinker John Lennox and atheist philosopher Michael Ruse on the topics of faith and science. Not only is the discussion interesting, but the way in which the conversation unfolds is something to note as well. You can find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrnXdzQRISM>

Like last week, I hope you find these resources enriching. I know they have been for me. Take some time this week to really wrestle with the question, "Isn't science enough?" and share your thoughts with people close to you as well as your life group.

Grace and peace,
Emerson