

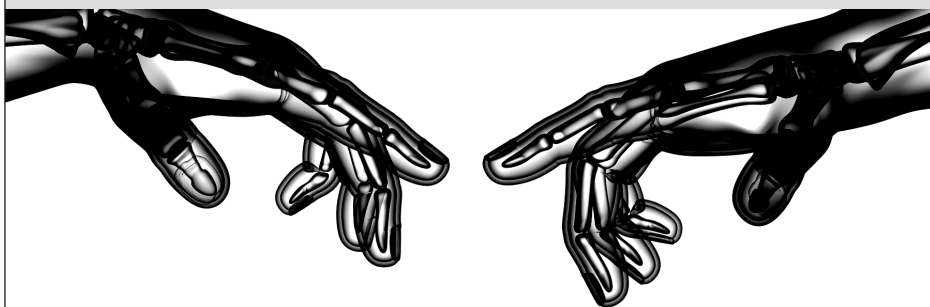
FAITH AND SCIENCE

IN THE 21ST CENTURY

*A POSTMODERN PRIMER FOR
YOUTH AND ADULTS*

8-Session Guide

Downloadable Video and Audio Resources Available Online



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FEATURING:

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“When we look at the world God made and learn more about it through science and discovery, we connect this to the death and resurrection of the Jesus, who also created it all and who has redeemed it all. And then we too can say, ‘It’s all right. The whole thing, *ta panta*, it’s all right.’”

—The Rev. Scott Hoezee



“Instead of lying on the beach sand looking at the sky, we today look through telescopes and monitors and computer graphs. Yet, what we see is just as marvelous and awesome as what our ancestors saw. The universe is as intricate as it is massive, as mysterious as it is understandable, as wondrous as it is glorious. . . . But the Psalmist made another point that remains true today, namely, regardless of how large our cosmos might be, God still loves you and me individually and intimately.”

—The Rev. Dr. Ted Peters



“The great arc of the biblical narrative sheds light on how human beings can build healthier and holier relationships with all that is, and with the source of all that is. There are plenty of stories about what goes wrong. . . . Yet the thrust of each part of the narrative leads us back toward our home in the One who has made all that is, and loves it all. We know that reality as God, whom we call love.”

—The Rt. Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori



“Jesus’s words about time and eternity, God’s beautiful poetic response to Job, are exactly what we ultimately hope for in our longing to make sense of the senseless. There are no easy answers to the paradox of time and eternity. But God inhabits Eternity and Jesus inhabits Time, and we believe by faith that God is good.”

—The Rt. Rev. Nicholas Knisely



“Our work, the work God has given us to do, is to cultivate communities and societies in which the fact of the divine image-bearing nature of humanity becomes self-evident in our regard for one another and for God’s good creation.”

—The Rev. David Wood



“Only with a sense of gratitude for the animals that God created to populate the world along with us, and only by acknowledging the limits God has placed on our power and freedom to use animals for our benefit, can we take responsibility for their welfare in a manner consistent with being creatures of God ourselves.”

—The Rev. Dr. Nancy J. Duff



“The psalmist reminds us that when we look at life through the eyes of faith, the goal is not simply the quantity of life, but the quality of life—the depth and breadth and height of life, not just its length. What makes life good is not just longevity, not just living more and more days, but becoming a certain kind of person, a person whose heart is wise before God.”

—The Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Long



“Life has an inexhaustible curriculum, and the lessons are infinite just like God even when it comes to a conversation about faith and science, God and the cosmos, creation and evolution, quantum physics and eternity, *imago dei* and science, genetics and morality, and health and healing. We have so much more to learn.”

—The Rev. Dr. Luke Powery

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How to Use This Resource

Who can use this book?

This book will guide your group—whether it’s a youth or adult formation class, Bible study group, or other small group—through each session of the Day1 Faith and Science series. Here you’ll find all the information to confidently prepare for and guide each session. All group members and any others interested in this important subject are encouraged to purchase a copy of this book to read, study, and explore the online resources personally.

How many sessions are there?

There are eight sessions, each with corresponding resources from one of eight noted Church leaders well versed in theology and science. The first session provides an introduction to the course and the final session explores ways to continue the discussion. The course can be expanded to sixteen sessions if that better fits your needs, with each offering optional discussions and activities.

How do we access the video and audio files?

This course utilizes video and audio content downloadable for a modest charge. The videos and audio files are intended to be played during the sessions. The audio files for each session include a sermon presented by one of the eight speakers along with opening and closing interviews; they originally aired on the national Day1 radio program and podcast (Day1.org).

To access these media files, go online to:

<http://day1.org/faithandscience>

and follow the instructions for making payment and accessing the files. You can download the files to a laptop and use a media player during the session. Individuals can also download these files to replay them on their own time.

What equipment and supplies are needed for the sessions?

You will need a laptop and Internet connection (Wi-Fi or cable) to access the video and audio files (we suggest you download them prior to the sessions). With a small group, a laptop screen may be sufficient to view the video, but with more than six we suggest you connect the laptop to a large-screen television or to a projector with a screen or blank wall. Be sure to practice the setup and use of the media files beforehand so you won't waste class time figuring it out. A whiteboard or large newsprint pad and markers will enable you to capture observations, questions, and ideas. Pens and paper should be made available to participants for note taking. Have enough Bibles for all participants; different translations would be helpful.

How should we facilitate the sessions?

- You may have one leader for all eight or sixteen sessions, or rotate leaders. Be clear well ahead of time about who will lead each session.
- Someone will need to be responsible for arranging for meeting space, setting up the room for group comfort, and making sure the necessary equipment is there.
- The session leader or other designated person should keep track of time. The leader should engage the group so that all feel free to participate as they wish and keep the conversation moving forward to ensure the topic is covered.

- Be sure to arrange to promote the study with dates, time, and location through appropriate website, email, and social media avenues.

What should we consider about the meeting space?

- In addition to ensuring that your desired space and equipment are available, take some time to make the space inviting and hospitable. You may want to offer coffee, tea, or other beverages and snacks before or during the gathering time.
- Make sure the lights and windows can be dimmed sufficiently to view the video presentation.
- Ensure you have a way of recording your members' comments or points either on an erasable board or a large pad of paper.
- Brainstorm with your group other ways to make the meeting space efficient and welcoming.

How flexible are the sessions time-wise?

This resource is designed to be tailored to your group's needs. Each session can be adjusted from 30 or 45 minutes to an hour or more depending on your own opening and closing activities and the extent of your discussions. Approximate times are given for each portion of every session. The core activities and discussions for each session will run approximately 60 minutes. If your group is large (over twelve), consider breaking into small groups more often than indicated for discussion so everyone will have an opportunity to share. While some of the segments in each session are marked as optional, you may find your time frame requires that you skip other sections as well. You may choose to spend two meetings per session. For evening or weekday groups,

you can extend the sessions by using the complete leader's guide, listening together to all audio files featuring the preacher's interviews and message, and giving time for deeper reflection and discussion.

What kinds of interaction are offered?

Throughout each session designated activities are offered with approximate time frames for **READING** Scripture together, **REFLECTING** individually, **WATCHING** video clips, **DISCUSSING** a given topic, **LISTENING** to audio clips, and breaking out into pairs, triads, or small groups to **THINK AND SHARE** more intimately. **OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES** may lend themselves to more creative experiences such as drawing, writing, and composing hymns or prayers.

How do we close each session and go from there?

Each session provides closing activities, some “homework” to do before the next session, and a suggested prayer, which you can adapt to reflect your own traditions and wishes. The leader can preview the next session's topic. It's helpful for the group to self-evaluate, either at the end of the session or on their own time, by asking questions such as: What new insights have I experienced in this session? What expanded my learning or changed my thinking in any way? How did the discussion help me understand my relationship with God more fully? What one thing would I like to share with someone else?

SESSION

1

Can Science and Faith Inform Each Other?

Does the universe make any sense? Does the cosmos have purpose? And what about us human beings? Do we matter? Is there any way to know? Listen to some people these days, including some vocal scientists, and you will hear the answer loud and clear: “No, not really. We don’t matter. We’re too small. The universe is pretty much pointless.”

—The Rev. Scott Hoezee

■ Background

The quarrel between religion and science has ancient roots. The first philosophers in Greece—such as Heraclitus and Parmenides—actively pursued what we would call scientific questions, thereby challenging the roles of the gods in

their culture. They asked questions about the character of human nature, the role of nature in shaping human life, the beginning of human life, and the shape of life after death. Their answers to such questions didn't involve the presence of supernatural forces; they focused instead on the natural world to provide explanations for the way humans interact with each other and the world.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the ongoing conversation between religion and science took on new dimensions with Charles Darwin's writings about evolution. When many people of faith read his books—or heard about them from their pastors—they rejected the idea that human life developed randomly without the involvement of a divine Creator providing and sustaining human life. As the twentieth century brought new scientific advances, such as quantum physics and developments in medicine that could prolong life and intervene in the process of death, even more questions arose for people of faith.

The major questions with which people of faith often grapple—and that are raised by the various speakers in this Day1 Faith and Science series—involve the compatibility of faith and science. For example, can we reconcile creation and evolution? How do new medical technologies alter our understandings of life and death? What about the purpose of life? Do scientists and people of faith have anything meaningful to say to each other?

In this first session, Scott Hoezee, author of *Proclaim the Wonder: Engaging Science on Sunday*, encourages us to think about these questions, focusing on Paul's approach to nature and God in Colossians.

■ Before the Session

Participants may like to come to the session having reflected on the issues to be discussed. The following questions

invite participants to engage rationally and spiritually with the topic, so share them in advance announcements of the group study. Encourage participants to jot down notes, questions, and reflections.

1. How does God reveal Godself to you through nature? Through the Bible? Through Jesus? Through the teachings of the Church? Through some other means?
2. What does God reveal to you through nature? Can you have faith in a God who is solely revealed through nature?
3. Is it possible for science and faith to be compatible? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. What views do the biblical writers—the psalmists or Paul, for example—have of the natural world and our place in it?

■ The Group Meeting

WELCOME those attending and if necessary have everyone introduce themselves briefly. Explain the purpose of this series. Open with prayer if you choose.

READ Colossians 1:15–23 (2 minutes)

Have a volunteer read it, read it together, or play Audio File 1-4 to hear Scott Hoezee read it. If possible, read the passage in different translations.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all

things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

WATCH Video 1 (4 minutes)

REFLECT (10 minutes)

Ponder the passage and Hoezee's comments by considering together some or all of these questions:

- Is this a biblical text that comes to mind immediately when you think about the relationship between faith and science?
- What messages in the passage do you hear about the relationship between faith and science?
- What is Paul's attitude toward creation and all things created?
- What is the purpose of the cosmos?
- What role do creatures play in creation?

- What can we know about God from this passage?
- How can we relate to God and to a scientific view of the world after reading this passage?
- What are Paul’s final words in the passage, and how do they relate to the questions about faith and science?

LISTEN Audio File 1-1 (5 minutes)

In his opening interview with Day1 host Peter Wallace, Scott Hoezee shares some of his goals in teaching his class on faith and science. He tries to introduce students to the current state of science and to areas of science with which they might be unfamiliar.

DISCUSS (5 minutes)

Talk about some of the newest developments in science with which you are familiar. What are some ways that you think religion and science can inform each other in light of new developments in science?

Optional Discussion

Hoezee also talks about revelation and our response to it in this interview:

Particularly in my Reformed tradition, we’ve long had this theology of revelation of two books. There’s the book of nature, the creation of God, and of course scripture; and of course we believe that due to our sinfulness we can’t read the book of nature correctly without—as John Calvin said—putting on the spectacles or the eyeglasses of scripture. But we’re always interpreting both books and we can make mistakes on both sides. . . . But there are sometimes conflicts, apparent conflicts, and

the question becomes, where does the mistake lie? Is it in the interpretation of what we're seeing through science, or is the mistake what we thought the Bible was saying all along? . . . We're never going to achieve perfect harmony and shouldn't expect to, I suppose, but come as close as we can to getting both right and then seeing where are the convergences and where are the questions we still have to work out.

Take a few minutes to consider these questions:

- Do we in the church have views of science that are outdated or that need updating?
- Do we have views of the Bible that might be left over from earlier in our lives and that need reconsideration?
- What does reconsideration of our views about science and about the Bible reveal about the relationship of the two?

LISTEN Audio File 1-2 (13 minutes)

In his sermon, entitled “Every Creature,” Hoezee raises several questions that relate to science and religion. In one section he discusses purpose and meaning—of human life and of the universe—and he probes the ways that we as people of faith might feel after scientific discoveries that question our role in the universe.

THINK AND SHARE (10 minutes)

Divide into small groups of two or three. Discuss the following questions based on what Hoezee said:

Oh, once upon a time before we knew anything much about how big the universe is, how many billions of

stars there are, how many billions of whole galaxies there are—once upon a time we human beings fancied that we mattered, that we were the center of the universe, that the whole thing was finally about little old us. But only the religiously deluded still think that. We now know we are tiny specks of life living on a tiny dust mote of a planet orbiting a tiny pin prick of light we call the sun, but that is just one star among a billion in the Milky Way galaxy alone. So, no, we don't matter. But is that so? Does the universe that science is uncovering in ever-more wondrous detail have no purpose and no meaningful place for humans? And does the Bible that in ever more wondrous detail reveals God have any way to speak into what science reveals?

- How does scientific evidence that the universe is self-regulated, in no need of my existence, make me feel?
- Is there any purpose and meaning in the universe?
- What role does God play in fashioning that meaning and purpose?
- Are there any contemporary scientific views of the universe or of humanity that give meaning and purpose to life and to the world?
- Is the biblical view of the universe and of human life any different from the scientific view of them? If so, in what ways are these two views different?

Optional Activity

LISTEN Audio File 1-3 (4 minutes)

Continue with Peter Wallace’s follow-up interview with Hoezee.

DISCUSS (5 minutes)

Consider the role of worship in your church:

- How does it proclaim the glory of all creation?
- Do we proclaim the glory and wonder of creation in sermon and song?
- Do we include thanks for our bodies, our health—and our sickness—in our prayers?
- How do our prayers proclaim and embrace the glory of creation?

Optional Discussion

Hoezee makes an important point about worship and glory in his follow-up interview:

What kind of things do you want to think about when you’re also in worship? John Calvin actually has a part in his *Institutes* where he suggests that it’s absolutely right in worship to give thanks to God for well-functioning kidneys and spleens, and the . . . physical things we don’t often associate with our worship. And again, it’s just the idea of seeing that bigger picture and incorporating it into your prayer life, incorporating into worship, into what we think about when we sing, into what we hear in sermons. That’s the challenge for preachers. Once that again becomes a habit of mind, it becomes a very natural part of how you frame up your faith all the time.

Optional Think and Share

Use one or all of these discussion starters in small groups as time allows:

- How would your church's worship need to change in order to proclaim the glory of God in all creation? How would your own prayer life need to grow in order to proclaim the glory of God in all creation?
- Can we say that we have more reasons to praise God the more we learn about creation through science? Give some examples.
- In what circumstances do we wrestle with questions of meaninglessness?
- Describe science's ability to address such questions, and about religion's ability to address the same questions. For example, when a loved one dies, how can science help us understand and deal with that loss? How can religion help us? Can they complement each other in such a situation?
- How is Jesus a model for embracing the bigness of the universe and the glory of creation? Find a few Bible passages that reflect Jesus's view of the universe as a place that has a purpose, for God or for humanity.

CLOSING CONVERSATION (5 minutes)

1. Have each person in the group describe one way that science and faith are compatible.
2. Have each person in the group describe how he or she will try to locate ways that the universe described by science can provide meaning and purpose for humanity.
3. Discuss a way this session has given you a new understanding or expanded view of God's purpose.

FOR NEXT SESSION (1 minute)

The next meeting will focus on the topic of God and the cosmos.

- Think about how Hoezee's reflections on meaning and purpose in the universe and in human life lay helpful groundwork for a discussion of God and the cosmos.

PRAYER (1 minute)

Dear God of such splendid created wonders, we give you thanks and praise for the gift of the creation and for the further gift we get through Jesus, who has restored that creation and will preserve it for all eternity. We give you thanks for all the opportunities we have even now to see hints and whispers of the world that is to come. And we are so very grateful, O God, for your gift of life, for your love and care for every creature, for all things. We give you thanks and praise, through Jesus Christ our Creator and Redeemer. *Amen.*