

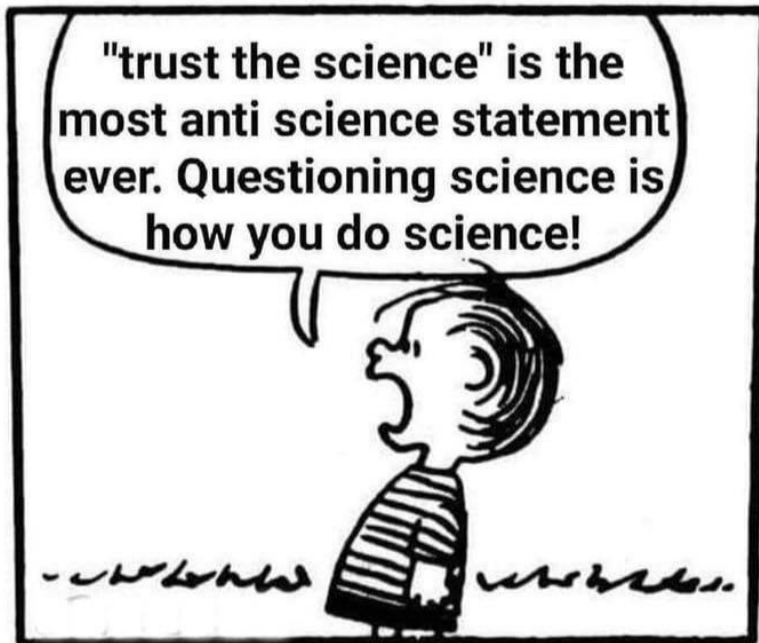
Good morning. Allow me to open us up with prayer.

So, it happened again. Things were written, I was a little behind what I wanted to fully write up, I was but working it. Then on Thursday, I ran up to Pittsburg for a demonstration of an amazing technology that I have been championing at work. After the meeting, four of us, the CEO of the company, one of his primary strategic advisors, the Program Manager on the project and I were sitting around a table. Pretty quickly it came out that all four of us are Christians. I recognized at that moment that this was a meeting was a God thing, and I needed to pay attention. I have edited much of this from the discussion that we had that afternoon.

My talk today is about faith. It is about how everything, even unbelief, requires faith. In that meeting, one of the guys mentioned that someone had said to him, that the difference between evidence and belief is faith. I have an overhead (SLIDE) ....and the fact is, that we (everyone, not just Christians) can prove very little! And yet we believe things, again Christians and non-Christians. My goal today is to show you that the jump for non-Christians is larger, more desperate, than the jump that we much make in faith. I admit....I will sometimes get a little technical, but I will try to keep from everyone's eyes glazing over.

When I started high school, I was an atheist. You could hear me talk about how some people had and needed their faith, I would rely on science and **facts**. What I did not appreciate at

the time is that atheism is a religious belief. And it takes faith! Faith that there is no God. And I have a slide about “Trusting Science”. (SLIDE)



Blindly trusting just about anything is not healthy nor wise. Trusting science is not an issue, believing that there is only science is a faith. A faith that there is not an invisible God. But also, honestly, it is faith that ignores a lot of evidence to the contrary and, I believe, and as I mentioned before, really takes a larger leap of faith than believing in God.

So, I wanted to inspect some of these leaps with you. In early high school I thought and literally preached to my friends, that I would rely on facts and science, rather than some mythical being that others seemed to need. But the more I learned of the world, of science, of the amazing order of the universe, it was all too perfect to be an accident. Too improbable to not have a force behind it. I came to realize there was a God, and

started looking for Him. Which brings me to my first verse:  
(SLIDE)

Romans 1:20 (NIV) 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

I think I remember the first time I read that verse. I certainly remember early in my Christian walk reading and recognizing the truth in it. Wallace, when talking about his father, said that his dad mentioned to him, you do not have to convince me there is a God, I walk outside and see the stars and sky and know that there is a God. Wallace is watching (or will watch), so I hope I captured that right.

For me, it was studying physics and science that showed me there is a God. Jordan Peterson is a Canadian psychologist, author and commentator. This came to him looking at the meta-physical, but he came to the same conclusion. I was watching a bit of an interview with him, and he was asked, "What is the best argument for atheism?" His response, "There is no good argument for atheism. It is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the world. It's an illegal chess move."

Jordan is saying, if you look at the world enough, if you look at people and inherent beliefs of people, there has to be a god behind it, or it makes no sense. He is basically saying that it is

the equivalent to cheating in Chess.....I have an example:  
(SLIDE)

But people do try to believe that there is no god. So I wanted to turn to look at some science that is used to “disprove” God, or at least, the Christian narrative.

Starting with the Big Bang and the Origin of the Universe. Discover magazine in April 2002 proclaimed on its cover, ““The universe burst into something from absolutely nothing—zero, nada. And as it got bigger, it became filled with even more stuff that came from absolutely nowhere. How is that possible? Ask Alan Guth. His theory of inflation helps explain everything.” Maybe you don’t believe me.....so here it is! (SLIDE)

You want to talk about believing in miracles and a leap of faith. Try the leap of faith that everything came from nothing. And it doesn’t matter how you look at the Big Bang, at some point, something had to come from nothing. The more we discover about Thermodynamics, this proves more and more true (making it a much larger jump!) And it gets worse for the Big Bang Theory. The Theory includes the initial expansion of matter that it cannot explain how the matter came into existence, how it started moving, nor the slowing of that matter (in a vacuum), that it cannot explain why the matter slowed with no idea how it slowed. Those three miracles honestly contradict science as we know it today. It’s magic, not science.

Now – let’s look at the formation of stars. The problem with stars is that we have the rapidly expanding universe and you need gasses to come together to coalesce together to form the star. But gases, especially in a hot environment, expand and disperse. So, to solve this, Cosmologists came up with Dark Matter - invisible, undetectable matter that generates a lot of gravity where it is needed to help form stars. But no explanation on how it got there, how it stopped moving, etc. That is just more magic.

Turning to the origins of life There are Christians who believe in evolution, and very early on, I was one of them. When I was in school, “evolution” was known as the Theory of Evolution. It was taught as a possible explanation of the origin of life on the planet and some of its flaws were openly examined. Now it is EVOLUTION, all caps, all “FACTS”, no doubts. The door on a debate is closed. But I have noticed, when one side declares the debate is over and closes the door, they know that they were losing. Back during the weeks leading up to Easter, I told stories of people who challenged Christianity and found themselves believe it. That is the danger to them of not closing the door, you might find out that the other side is correct. This college professor was a devout atheist, when a prominent Christian physicist came to work at the same college. He was proficient on all the evolution talking points and set to correct his colleague and budding friend. He found the man receptive to the conversations and also found him more than capable of defeating every argument against God and creation that he could muster. He struggled with the logic and evidence that his

colleague shared, and how much his logic and what he had thought was evidence faded under the Christian argument.

One of the big ones that challenges to that way of thinking is that evolution requires that Life comes from non-life. This has not been observed, despite numerous attempts. Researchers trying to prove it have this done experiments, attempting to mirror conditions believed to have existed on a primordial Earth, and seen “organic” molecules be formed during their experiments. I love the word organic, because it sounds like life! But an organic molecule are molecules typically found in living organisms but are not alive and really can just be a number of Carbon atoms that have connected with Hydrogen, Oxygen and Nitrogen atoms. They can be similar to RNA and DNA strands, but are not really them. So, let’s look at the leap. I have a primordial earth, water, lava, lightning that all interact and generate some organic molecules. What is the step that those molecules coalesce and become an amoeba? There are 10s of millions to over a billion, specific organic molecules in an amoeba, all precisely placed and with very specific purposes. How do you get from a soup of a couple 10, maybe 100s of random organic molecules to just the organization required for an amoeba? When the natural tendency (Entropy) would cause them to separate and break apart. Magic.....that’s how.

Looking more specifically at Evolution, more problems crop up. If all life evolved from single cell creatures, that it is a huge leap to believe magically came into existence, where are the two celled organisms, the four celled organisms? How is it that

today there are one cell organisms and these incredible complex organisms on Earth today? There must have been something in between, and where is it today and or at least its fossils?

One of the things that Evolutionists fight with is how designed everything appears. One famous atheist biologist stated: "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." Let's say that again....that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose. This man is saying that the evidence is that there is a purpose, and if there is a purpose and design, there is a creator. He sees the design but needs it not to be designed. How big is that leap of faith?! To admit that the evidence implies design, but going to take the leap of faith that the evidence is wrong.

And I could keep going!! Evolutionists cannot explain the level of diversity on the planet of different plants and animals, the understanding of DNA has led to calculations that has the chance to make a mutation to make required step in Evolution is 1 in  $10^{77}$ , there are holes in the fossil records that completely undermine the whole theory....and more. I read an article about how objections to evolutions are usually based on religious arguments. I do not believe I raised even a single religious argument in that diatribe.

So let's summarize: (SLIDE) (and I apologize for the next three of the next four slides...all eye charts) To believe in a non-creation view of the world you have to believe in:

- Everything came from nothing
- It started moving away from the center for no understandable reason
- It slowed for no understandable reason
- Stars were able to form due to this undetectable, unseeable matter, that we do not know where it came from, but has a strong gravitational pull
- All of that eventually generated a primordial earth where organic molecules were able to be formed
- Single celled organisms sprung to life from – ignoring Entropy
- These single cell organisms evolved into the diversity of different living organisms that we have today, despite any real evidence of it being able to happen and no examples of more complex organisms, but less complex than animals/humans.
- And honest more...

That is a leap of faith! Why is that one line underlined....because it is the only thing in that list that has been somewhat proven....somewhat.

Thinking about the narrative in Genesis. It explains the origin of the Universe, Stars, Earth, diversity of organisms. It is almost as if the author of Genesis knew that these debates would eventually occur.....just saying.



So let's be fair and look at the other side, the Christian leap of faith.

Leaning heavily on C.S. Lewis's analysis, when we look at Jesus, there are a couple possibilities. (SLIDE) He could have been legend (did not actually exist), liar, lunatic or Lord.

So starting with Legend. Did Jesus exist? Well first we have the Bible, Luke's account is specifically telling. Matthew, Mark and John are eyewitnesses, and for Jesus of the Bible to be made up, they had to be evil. But Luke's gospel is based on interviews and investigation, talking with many eyewitnesses. There are significant writings of the disciples of apostles (Ignatius and Polycarp), which add to the evidence that Jesus did exist and do the things that are stated.

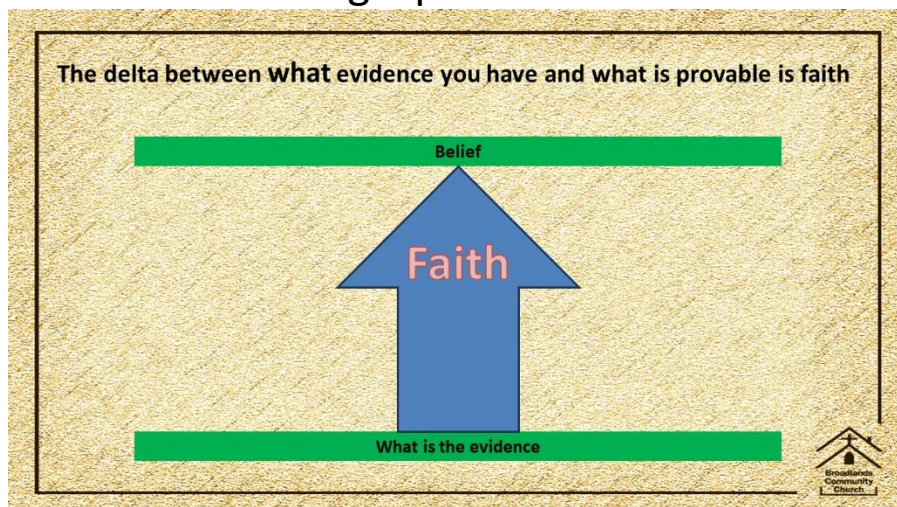
But I wanted to pull in non-Christians from the time and see what they said:

(SLIDE) Tacitus (AD 56-120), a Roman historian and politician: "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome,

where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.”

(SLIDE) Pliny the younger (AD 61-113), a lawyer, author, and magistrate of Ancient Rome: “They [the Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”

These reports are from a non-believing point of view, but these men had no reason to pass on a fake story. Quite the contrary, they both knew that Jesus had been alive and show pieces of the narrative found in the gospels and Acts.



So I want to go back to this slide (SLIDE)...mostly so that we do not leave that eye-chart up, but I want you to imagine going forward what is going on with that lower green line, as the things that do not make sense fall away and we continue to see evidence for Jesus and the Bible.

Was Jesus a liar? Where you really have to start this one is did Jesus claim deity? Wallace has spent some significant time recently pointing out Jesus saying that He is "I am", there are a bunch of them. Jesus also uses the term "Son of Man" (which is a reference to Daniel where the Son of Man receives the sovereignty of God in Daniel chapter 7). And Jesus said I and the Father are one. That was ONE of the times that the Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus for Blasphemy. So, the Jews knew that He was claiming to be God. Trying to hold the position that Jesus never claimed to be God is undefendable. You must ignore too much evidence to the contrary.

But that proves He said it, it does not prove that he was lying or a lunatic. So looking at that – What would be His motivation for lying? What did He get for it? Cult leaders get money, power and sex – Jesus did not have the coin to pay the temple tax, there is no evidence of trying to grab power, etc. And he either had to trick the disciples or they were in on it. Jesus and most of them died to protect that lie, if it is so.....most of the disciples were given the option to denounce and they did not. Jesus was also really given the chance to walk away from the "lie" and not die. Getting some of them to die for the lie is possible, but all of them? That is pretty difficult to swallow.

Was Jesus a lunatic and the disciples fell for it. All the Gospel record miracles that Jesus performed. Additionally, His teachings are well respected in many forums. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. both drew from Jesus's teaching. Gandhi calling Jesus "one of the great teachers of mankind." Is it possible that 12 disciples followed Jesus and did not realize He was crazy. Is it possible for a lunatic to be consistent and fool people. I asked the question that way as – of course it is POSSIBLE, but it is very much not probable.

Gandhi calling Jesus a great teacher. C.S. Lewis noted that you cannot call Jesus simply a "great teacher". You have to deal with his claim to be God. He is either crazy – the equivalent of a man who believes he is a pouched egg, lying or Lord. And the eyewitness evidence (Matthew, Mark, John) and the researched evidence (Luke) found in the Bible, the corroborated evidence of secular writers and the continued faith of followers who walked with the original disciples, all give evidence that Jesus was real, did and said what the Bible says.

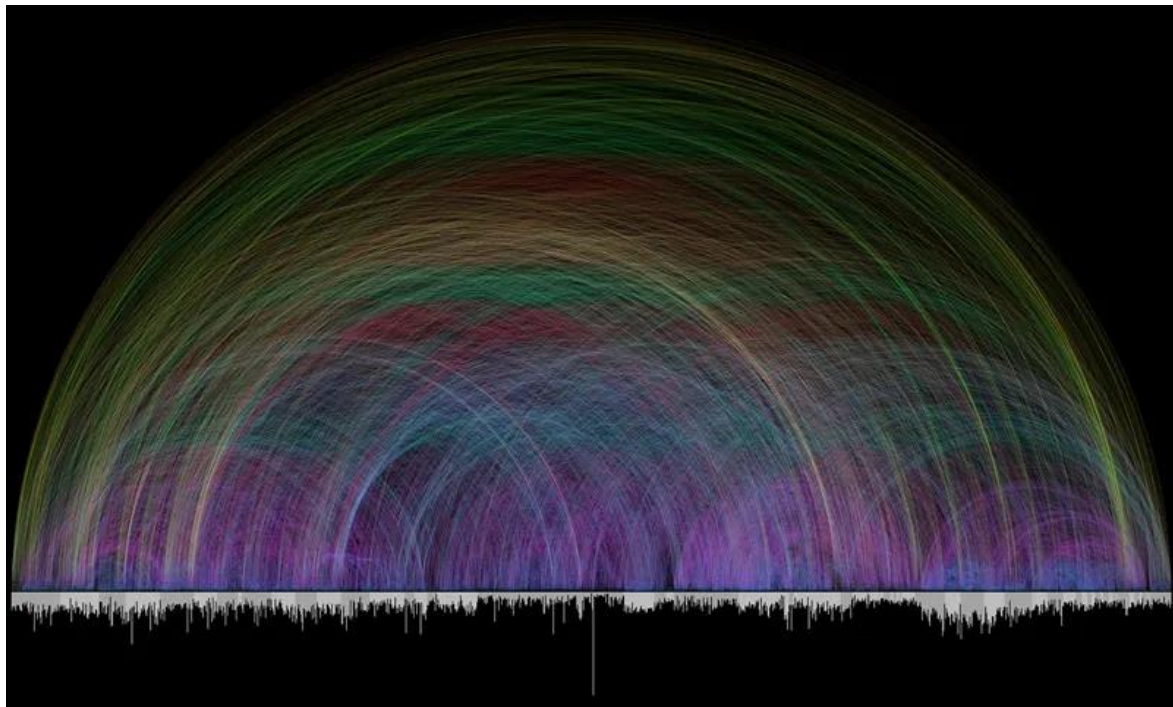
Looking at the Word of God – we find evidence to support Faith. Remember....I am not proving that God exists, I am showing that the leap of faith is not as uninformed as the leap of faith required to not believe in God.

The Bible – there is no other book like it! The Bible was written over 1600 years, in 66 books, by over 40 authors, on 3 continents, in 3 languages, yet comes together as one Book.

As I mentioned last year – Reading the Bible with these three concepts in mind can really help you grasp it.

- The Bible is the unfolding revelation of Jesus and the redemption of man
- The OT contains physical picture of spiritual realities of the NT

So the Bible story is consistent....despite its crazy process of coming into being. How consistent....Look at this (SLIDE)



This is a visual representation of the overt cross-references of the Bible. The length of the white lines going down represents the number of times it is referenced, the arcs connect the references.

Can you imagine an author writing a book with that level of consistency and cross referencing. I do not believe that it is humanly possible. A single person could not have written the Bible, achieved the stunningly consistent message and achieved this level of cross referencing. Unless that single person is God.

It has also been a great 100 years for the Bible, much of it during my lifetime. Cities, rulers and events in the Bible that had not been discovered, appeared to be missing, that have found. For years during my young life, I remember stories of places that had not been found and ruler's names being wrong in the Bible, proving that the Bible is wrong, and then they were found.... Does that prove that the Bible is right?

Jerico is a fun example....while found more than 100 years ago, multiple things have been discovered that match the Biblical story. That the city walls did fall down in the manner that the Bible stated, that a portion of the wall did not, which is critically important because Rahab's house was part of the wall, and for her to be saved that had to be true, and that the siege was short and that the Israelites devoted the city to the Lord (they burned it).

How do you prove that last point? A large amount of burnt grain was discovered. Burnt grain? Yep....what does that mean, first that the siege was short (In Joshua – 7 days)....a long siege would have used up the grain. Second, that the invading army

did not take the grain, as most armies would, instead they burnt it as they did the rest of the city. Look at this: (SLIDE)

Joshua 5:24 (NIV) Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house.

What was not found.....Iron, Gold and Silver....maybe looted after the fact....cannot deny that.....but still interesting.....

So we have the writings of eyewitnesses, Luke's investigation, the writings of the disciples of the apostles, writings of historians and philosophers who were not Christians, but point to the same story. The eyewitnesses spoke of miracles and everyone, even non-believers today often note that amazing teaching of Jesus. The Bible and how it has over and over, proved to be accurate as the archaeological discoveries happen. And I have not even touched possibly the most powerful of proofs which is prophecies that cannot be denied. The Bible contains about 2,500 prophecies of which about 2,000 have been fulfilled. What if we got half of those wrong and there are only 1000 fulfilled prophecies in the Bible. There is scant evidence of prophecies from outside the Bible being fulfilled, and nothing close to those numbers....

(Last Overhead) Does all of that Prove that there is a God and Jesus is Him....no....as noted in the beginning, it takes a leap of faith. I just hold that the leap is better informed, standing on better proof, and honestly, people who believe this welcome

the challenge to discuss their faith, rather than declare that the debate is over. The leap of faith to believe that there is no god requires crazy assumptions, ignoring actual science....it is an illegal chess move.

Now...I was going to finish there, but in looking into Gandhi's view of Christ, I found an unsettling quote of Gandhi...“If it weren't for Christians, I'd be a Christian.” Many Christians poorly represent Christ. And that was what this portion of the sermon was about....realizing who Jesus really was, rather than the representations often of good intentioned people in representing Him. Gandhi saw so much in Christ, that he would have followed Him. But he saw the flaws of Christians as too great a proof to accept Christ. I would encourage us to let Christ shine forth, we will fail and sometimes get it wrong, but taking ourselves out of the equation as much as possible and showing Christ is the goal. The Bible is the unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ and the redemption of man. Half of the purpose of the Bible is to show Christ as He is....the other half is to show that we need redemption and that through Christ we have it. So Christ is paramount in both of those messages, paraphrasing the words of John the Baptist, we must diminish so that he can increase. Let us do that in all we do.