



Leader's notes

why on earth... faith v science?

Some people think that faith and science don't mix.

In this session we take a closer look at this idea.

We find that faith and science can work together to help us to make sense of the world.

Needed: Drinks, name/picture badges (if desired), Session Sheets, some blank sheets of paper and pens.

Leader's Notes

General Intro: *why on earth...?* takes a look at some of life's hardest questions. Each session offers simple first steps in exploring a difficult subject. These are not final answers, just starting-points. Group members are invited to talk about their own thoughts and experiences with honesty. Then we explore Christian angles on the subject, and begin to think how these might apply in our own lives.

Session Intro: How do faith and science fit together? Is one right and the other wrong, or is there another way to look at it? For some people, the question of faith and science can be an obstacle to believing in God. Some well known thinkers have attacked the whole idea of belief, arguing that science is rational, while faith is just superstition. But the history of science tells a rather different story. Countless top scientists down the centuries have had a faith in God, and lots still do. The aim of this session is to help people see that science and faith belong together, and that neither is a threat to the other.

Starters (approx 30 mins)

- Drinks, welcome, notices, write name badge (if desired).
- Two short passages later in the session need to be read aloud. Identify somebody who is happy to do this (alternatively, the leader can plan to read them).
- ICEBREAKER: Ask everybody to think of one invention they couldn't live without. They have a couple of minutes for this.
- DISCUSS (whole group): Ask people to share with the group which invention they came up with, and why.
- BACKGROUND NOISE (in pairs):

Ask group members to get into pairs. Hand out Session Sheets and invite everybody to look at the *Background Noise* picture.

Explain that we all carry thoughts and ideas in our head on a range of issues. These ideas may come from lots of places. In pairs, we are going to explore the 'background noise' already in our heads on the topic. Explain that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers here: it's all about examining our own starting-points.



Explain that the thought-bubbles represent:

- > (School) School and upbringing
- > (People) Friends and family
- > (TV) TV and film
- > (Smartphone) Social media
- > (Question-Mark) Anything else

In their pairs, invite group members to discuss their own thoughts and experiences to do with science and faith. Where have they come across people's views on this subject: school science lessons? TV programmes? Church leaders? Friends? Other places? Use the thought-bubbles as a prompt if helpful.

After a few minutes, invite people to rejoin the whole group. Invite them to share anything they discussed if they would like to.

Main Course (approx 45 mins)

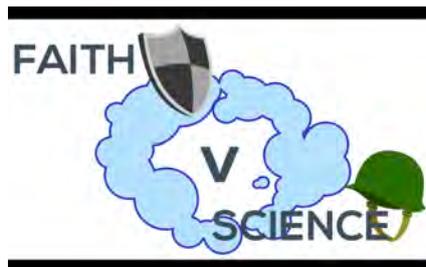
- VIDEO

- ON SHEET:

Ask group members to look at *Video Recap*, a summary of key points in the video:



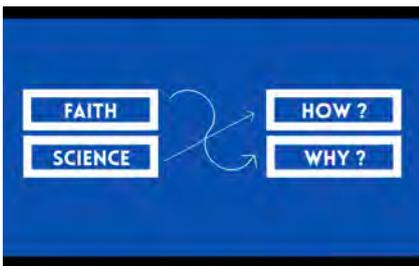
One radio, different facts



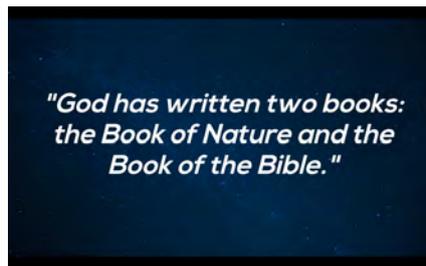
Faith & science: enemies?



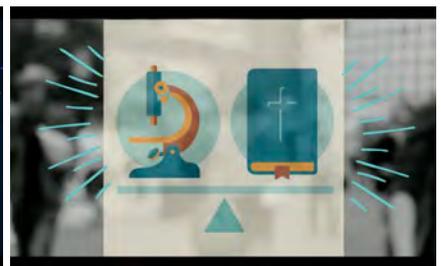
Scientists with faith



Answering different questions



Two books: Nature & Bible



Faith & science together

- DISCUSS (*whole group*): Allow a few minutes to discuss each of the following questions:

- What part of the video stood out for you?
- What did Galileo mean when he said God has written the 'Book of Nature'?

[Note to leaders: the video quotes Galileo saying God has written two 'books', Nature and the Bible. A group member who knows history might point out that Galileo was opposed by the Church in his own day. This is true! But it may be helpful to know that:

a) Galileo kept his faith, and carried on believing that faith and science belong together.

b) The Church later admitted Galileo was right and they had been wrong to oppose him.]

- ON SHEET: Divide the group into two groups (an easy way to do this is to go round the group in turn and ask people to call out a number: 1, 2, 1, 2...). Tell one group they are the **Science Group**, and the other group that they are the **Faith Group**. Give each group a blank sheet of paper and a pen, and read out the instructions on the Session Sheet for both groups, so all can hear what both groups are doing. They have about 10 minutes for this exercise.
- *(Note to leader: you may need to help the Faith Group, as the Science Group can use ideas from the Icebreaker. Areas where the Christian faith has helped humanity might include: great music, art and architecture, medical care, charity and foodbanks, education, campaigning to end the slave trade, peacemaking, emphasis on forgiveness, values to live by, hope for life after death.)*

Science Group:

Draw a vertical line down the middle of the sheet, dividing the page into two. On the left side, write or draw three inventions you think have helped humanity, or enriched people's lives. On the right side, write or draw one invention you think has had a negative effect on the world.

Faith Group:

Draw a vertical line down the middle of the sheet, dividing the page into two. On the left side, write or draw three aspects of the Christian faith (or the Church) you think have helped humanity, or enriched people's lives. On the right side, write or draw one aspect of the Christian faith (or the Church) you think has had a negative effect on the world.

- DISCUSS (*whole group*): Ask each group in turn to share with the whole group what they listed, and why. After each group has reported back, ask the other group if they would agree with those choices. What would they add or change?
- ON SHEET: Ask group members to stay in their two groups. Read out the following instructions on the Session Sheet for both groups, so all can hear what both groups are doing. They have about 10 minutes for this exercise.

Science Group:

Imagine you are a group of leading scientists, and the other group are Christian leaders. Discuss in your group:

- a) As scientists, what is your biggest fear about the other group's faith agenda?
- b) What is the best way the other group could help/enrich your science?

Faith Group:

Imagine you are a group of Christian leaders, and the other group are leading scientists.

Discuss in your group:

- a) As Christian leaders, what is your biggest fear about the other group's science agenda?
 - b) What is the best way the other group could help/enrich your faith?
- DISCUSS (*whole group*): Ask each group in turn to share with the whole group what they came up with. How does the other group react to what they say?
 - ON SHEET (*whole group*):
 - Ask somebody to read out *Text: Einstein on faith and science*.

"Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."

(Albert Einstein, 1941)

- DISCUSS (*whole group*): This quote comes from Albert Einstein, a leading scientist of the 20th century. What do you think Einstein means?
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Dessert (*approx 15 mins*)

- Invite the group to join in either the Creative Prayer or Space to Think (as decided by the leader before the session). Then end by praying the Closing Prayer out loud.

1) Creative Prayer:

- Invite all members of the group to picture themselves at the edge of the sea, watching the most beautiful sunset they have ever seen.
- In silence, ask them to take a few minutes to think about this scene from different perspectives.
- What might science say about the sunset? What might faith say about it? What feelings does it stir up in them?

2) Space to Think: time to reflect on words from the Bible, ending with the Lord's Prayer. Tell the group you are going to read out a short passage from the Bible (below). Say you are going to read the words twice, slowly. Invite them to take a few minutes in silence to think what one word or idea stands out to them and why. Read the passage (twice, slowly):

'He owns the depths of the earth, and even the mightiest mountains are his. The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the sheep under his care.' (Psalm 95: 3-7)

(Modern Version)

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

(Traditional Version)

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

• **Closing Prayer** *(read aloud):*

Lord God, we thank you for the richness and beauty of our world. Thank you for the wonders revealed to us by science: planets and stars, atoms and molecules, animals and rocks, fish and birds, bodies and clouds. And thank you for the eyes of faith. Thank you that we can find in creation the evidence of your handiwork, and that we can find in our lives and relationships evidence of your love. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Takeaway

- ON SHEET: Ask somebody to read out the *Takeaway* section:

Choose one of the areas of science that came up in today's session. It might be space and planets, microscopic life, rocks and fossils, chemicals, animals, the climate, or another area.

In the week ahead, find out more about it: in a book, online, podcast, or whatever. Ask God to fill you with a sense of wonder and thanksgiving about this amazing aspect of creation.