

101 - Jeff Zweerink Full ep.

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SPEAKERS

Jeff Zweerink, David Sandstrom

D David Sandstrom 00:00

The reason why I'm having you on is because I want people to know that a belief in God is grounded upon solid science and solid reason. And it's my contention. And then people that listen to the show on a regular basis know this. But if you're just checking the Show out, that we maximize our health potential when we align our lives more fully with God's natural design for spirit, mind, and body, but you're not going to be real anxious to submit yourselves to God's design, if you don't believe in God, or if you do believe in Him, that you have reasons not to trust him. So I would like to spend some time just digging unpacking that a little bit about how trustworthy God is. And if you don't mind, Jeff, I'd like to just kind of play the devil's advocate and ask you a few of the challenging questions that are out there about the Christian faith. And, you know, from an astrophysics point of view, welcome to the Natural Health Matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential, so that you can look and feel your best at any age. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, Naturopathic Doctor and Biblical Health Coach, and this is episode number 101.

D David Sandstrom 01:16

Today, we have in the show, Jeff Zweerink, Jeff is a research scholar at reasons to believe and a project scientist at UCLA. He's got a PhD in astrophysics. He's the author of several books, in his writings and speaking encourage people to consider the connection between scriptures truth and scientific evidence. Jeff, Welcome to Natural Health Matters.

J Jeff Zweerink 01:38

Looking forward to our conversation today. Thanks for the invitation to be here.

D David Sandstrom 01:42

Sure thing, I appreciate you taking the time. I am just fascinated by the fact that you use

astrophysics and blend that with your faith in God. So how is it that you got to the point where you're doing what you do today? What's your background?

J

Jeff Zweerink 01:57

So I grew up I've just been fascinated in science for as long as I can remember. In fact, one of my earliest memories was sitting at the top of the stairs in our duplex, my dad is downstairs giving a demonstration to a group that my older brother was involved in, and he'd dip balls in liquid nitrogen, throw them on the wall, and they'd shatter. He'd mix chemicals together, and they'd make weird noises, cool sounds, neat shapes, funny compounds. And what fascinated me I've seen that many, many times. I've done many of those demonstrations since but what fascinates me is that these things look almost magical. But yet we know what's going on. And so we can explain them. And I just love being able to explain this fascinating creation that God's given us to live in. My parents were both Christians have taught us about Christianity. And the idea that science and Christianity go together. It's just been lived out in my family. But as I've started it realized they really do belong together.

D

David Sandstrom 02:56

Absolutely. You know, I've believed for quite some time that you know, a lot of the great thinkers, a great scientist, Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci, even even Einstein, they enjoyed studying nature, and studying the physical world, so that they could learn something about God. And Doesn't the Bible say that in Romans chapter one that we, we can look to nature to learn something about his invisible attributes. So I just love this topic. I really do. And I think studying astrophysics as you have and blending that into scriptural truths, is even all the more fascinating. Just one more quick story. There foods foods, full time airline pilot for 31 years. And one of the things that I used to really enjoy especially if we're above and under cast is an overcast layer of clouds, but we're above it. And you get to see the stars like you can't believe up there because you know, very little atmosphere above us. And I would just turn like dim lights down in the cockpit and look out

J

Jeff Zweerink 04:10

Amen, yeah, I agree. This creation is just fascinating. I don't get to see the stars from airplanes very often. But one of my favorite things is vacationing out in the mountains where you get up higher in the higher in the atmosphere, you get clear nights and just watching things go by and this recognition that by studying how things behave here on Earth, we can actually understand what's going on out in the cosmos. That's it's just a fascinating idea to me that that is the case.

D

David Sandstrom 04:39

Yeah, yeah, very good. So why don't you I'm really curious, I know this is probably a big question but so good. Can you give me in an unnatural nation the listening audience, just just a sample of of how the your your, your study of astrophysics? Did it did it lead you to a deep Have faith in God? Or how did that blend for you?

J**Jeff Zweerink 05:03**

So one of the things that I found, you know, I have a PhD in astrophysics, I graduated from Iowa State with that degree looking at gamma rays from exotic extreme environments in the universe. I'd been a Christian for many years. And what was fascinating to me is that, you know, shortly after I got out of college, was kind of looking into apologetics and talking about how science and Christianity go together. And I actually found myself anxious about new discoveries coming out, you know, whether it'd be finding life in a Martian meteorite, something about evolution, something about the cosmos. And as I sat and thought about it, if you'd asked me directly, I would have said, of course, Christianity and science go together. But I was worried that perhaps this next discovery was going to be the one that showed Christianity to be wrong. Yeah. And what I appreciated so much about that revelation is it gave me a chance to think about it. And if God is who He says He is, in the Bible, that discovery is never going to happen. And so there's lots of stuff that I don't understand lots of places where I think, ooh, that might conflict. But every place where I've dug in, whether it be looking at is there a beginning to the universe, because the Bible talks about there being a beginning to the universe, whether there might be life out in the cosmos, whatever these discoveries are, what I've recognized is that the Bible is a very reliable source of information about how this cosmos works and who God is. And there's no aspect where I can dig in, and I'm gonna find a place where it says, Oh, God isn't who he claimed to be God's a reliable, trustworthy God. And that gives me the freedom to just go out and explore. All of this vast creation has given us all of this incredible relationships you've given us to delve into Scripture deeply. And there is no question that doesn't have a good answer, at some point in time, because God is that reliable?

D**David Sandstrom 07:00**

Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. You know, I'm reminded of I don't know who first said this, but the quote is, a little bit of science will pull you away from God. But a lot of science will bring you back. And it sounds like that's been kind of your experience.

J**Jeff Zweerink 07:16**

It really is. And I'll give you one example. When I first started working at reasons to believe the prevailing picture was, you know, we live in a universe and there was this idea of bubbling about a multiverse. And my original thought was, oh, the multiverse can't be right. That's, that just doesn't fit with Christianity. And as I began to investigate more, what I realized is there's actually decent evidence that we may well find that we live in a multiverse. Yeah. And I'm like, oh, what that's that's how do I handle that? That's problematic. And so I said about, alright, let's go investigate, what is it actually have to say and the more I dug into it, the more I realized, one, I think there's good scientific evidence to think a multiverse exists. But as I went and looked at Christianity, God created this universe, he's created the angelic realm. Now, granted, that's a spiritual realm, not a physical realm, but he's going to create a new heavens and new earth, which is different than this one. There's nothing unbiblical about a multiverse. And what I recognized on deeper study was that a multiverse actually fits very comfortably within a Christian worldview. And all the problems arise when you try and look at it in a strictly naturalistic or postmodern worldview. So the multiverse actually makes the case for Christianity more robust, even though it appeared to be a threat when I first encountered it.

D

David Sandstrom 08:40

Yeah, it's super interesting. So can you give us some examples of why that complicates the the naturalistic universe mentality that? Well, we pretty much got it all figured out matter evolve on its own? And can you give us an example of why they have more trouble with the multiverse concept?

J

Jeff Zweerink 09:00

So when you're talking with the multiverse, let's let's kind of define it a little bit. You know, if we can talk about our universe or a universe, I'm just going to define that as everything that we're like could possibly get to the earth, because that's all the stuff we can measure. We can't, we can't tell. We can't measure anything beyond that at this point, right. And so if that's the universe, the multiverse is just anything beyond that. And the idea in the scientific community is that our, if you go to the edge of our universe, there's just a whole lot more of the same stuff. It may be infinitely large, which means that every possible thing that can happen will happen somewhere in the multiverse. And there's a lot more to that you could have other bubbles where the laws of physics might look different, but the net effect is in a naturalistic multiverse, anything that can possibly happen will happen somewhere. Right now given enough. Yeah, it just it does. There's no doubt about In fact, things that we think are rare are actually they happen many times throughout the multiverse right? Now, let's ask the question, what does it mean? You know, I'm just wearing what does it mean to have my identity being Jeff's wearing, if there's the same arrangement of atoms somewhere else out in the universe, I'd like to think that I have this being I've made choices, I've had some sense of self determination, that what I do actually matters. Or the reality of it is all of the matters just floating in a naturalistic model. All of that matters just floating along every possible outcomes, realize, so these choices that I think I'm making are actually just an illusion, they don't actually exist. So these things that are important to us as people like identity, and freewill, and justice, in a naturalistic model, they go out the window, in a Judeo Christian worldview. There's only one Jeff's wearing, because this is the only place that God has taken the matter that makes up jobs wearing in the spirit that makes up jobs wearing can put them together. So in a naturalistic model, things that are important to humanity really are just elusive and don't actually exist. Whereas in Christianity, that makes sense. And if you're not careful, the whole scientific process is just undermined in a naturalistic worldview, which is kind of ironic, because then you have this scenario where natural or science helps us point to naturalism, which actually undermines the very basis of science. So it's kind of self refuting in that sense.

D

David Sandstrom 11:32

Yeah, that's really interesting. So can you speak to the idea of, you know, there's some things we can't see. So, so I'm thinking somebody might be out there wondering, what about black holes? What is a black hole is could that be part of the multiverse?

J

Jeff Zweerink 11:50

Black holes, if a multiverse exists, they probably have black holes somewhere else. But we know black holes exist in our universe, they're just a natural consequence of the way God has

put creation together. And the way you know, here's the recipe for making a black hole. Take something like the Earth, you know, there's a solid ground on the earth, because the electrons and my feet hit the electrons in the ground, and they repel each other, and I can't go any further. But if I start adding more matter to the earth, eventually, things are gonna, it's gonna get more and more massive, and the gravitational pole is going to overwhelm that electromagnetic return or repulsion, and it's going to squeeze things down further. And you think, okay, it's going to squeeze it down further, eventually, there's a another, there's a place where you can't push electrons into the same place. And that's going to cause that contraction to stop, that's a white dwarf, while if you keep throwing more mass on a white dwarf, gravitational attraction is going to grow, and eventually, it's going to collapse. Again, it's going to push all the electrons into the protons to make neutrons, it's going to collapse further, and it gets smaller, now we get down from the size of the Earth, we get down something to the size of a large city. And to there's this repulsion where you can't push neutrons into the same place. And if you keep throwing more and more mass on there, eventually, the gravity will overcome that repulsion, and it will collapse down and there's nothing to stop it, and it will collapse down into a black hole. And all a black hole is is a place where there's that much gravitational attraction. And the gravitational attraction is so strong, that even something moving at the speed of light cannot escape from it. And so we know that in the center of our galaxy, there's enough maths, confined into a small enough region that it's got to be a black hole, there are stars that we see that we know are orbiting black holes. So we see black holes, rather we see the consequences of black holes, you can't see the light from a black hole. That's impossible. But we see the consequences of black holes in our observations throughout the universe.

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David Sandstrom 13:57

Yeah, that's really cool. So I think someone else probably thinking the same thing. I'm thinking right now. That's a great answer. Thank you. Thank you for that. Yeah. What about there's a lot of evidence these days and from fairly credible sources, from the federal government, military pilots, talking about UFOs. You know, it's it's pretty some pretty solid evidence, they absolutely do exist. Any any thoughts on that? I mean, are they are these aliens? Are they? Are they time travelers? What do you have any explanations, any theories?

J

Jeff Zweerink 14:31

The most I've looked at and I can't say I've investigated extensively and looked at every single detail, but what I do know is that there are photographic video evidence of these very physical appearing phenomenon. They show up on radar, they'll show up in a camera set of sequences. The question is, what's the explanation for that? Very often, these things that we see move in on physical ways, they will be moving and make corners that are just impossible to make things like that. My suspicion is that most of those are actually some sort of military technology. I mean, just think about it, you know, we've got well trained fighter pilots who are going out engaging, we want to have the military upper edge, there are countries that are fighting against us that want to have the military upper edge. Most of these things, most of these aerial engagements are in a realm where you've got a plane, you got sensors on it, what's the best way to or what would be a great way to get an upper hand on a plane that might have a technology that's beyond ours? If you can figure out how to confuse the technology into thinking something's there, that's not, that would be a great thing. So I think there's a lot of this, that's probably military technology that we just don't want out there. And I don't know

that's the case. But it would seem to make sense. And part of the reason why I don't think it's actually aliens from somewhere else, is that our universe is huge. And the perils of traveling across the universe are immense. And I am open, I'm actually pretty open to the idea that God's created life throughout the universe, and we may interact with it in some fashion at some point. But I know the fastest spaceship we have launched, thus far, will take 40,000 years to get closer to another star than to the sun. Now you say, well, maybe we can get up to where we're traveling 10% The speed of light? Well, that makes it you know, that brings that down to 400 years to get to the closest star, or sorry for two years to get to the closest star. But still, you're now traveling at 10% The speed of light, if you encounter a speck of dust or a little micro meteorite, it's going to destroy your ship because of the amount of energy involved in the collision, just because of the speeds because energy goes up as the square the speed, the velocity, so I'm open to the idea that God may have created life out there, and we might encounter it. But traveling through space is enormously difficult because of the immense sizes and the incredible dangers. So I'm really hesitant to claim that any of this is actually aliens. Because it's just really hard. And why would you know that it's just hard for that story to hold together given what has to happen for a technology like that to exist.

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David Sandstrom 17:36

So I just want to emphasize one thing you said, forget the fastest spaceship, we've been able to build 40,000 years to get closer to the nearest star in our galaxy. And there's billions of stars in the Milky Way galaxy. And there's billions, hundreds of billions, hundreds of okay. And then we see hundreds of billions of galaxies with something like the Hubble telescope. It's just, it's breathtaking to think about it. You know, I remember, before I before I knew what I just told you, you just told me. I was fine with a guy who was really into astronomy. And he actually bought a pair of binoculars with him up in the cockpit and those dark nights he would he would look out. And I said, Hey, that's really cool. You know something about the stars. I said, you know, what is that white cloud that's above us? You know, we're at 37,000 feet. There's no clouds above us. But it looks like a white cloud above us. He's like, Dave, that's not a cloud. Those are billions of stars that look like a cloud and like, so that's what the Milky Way is. He's like, yep. So wow, that just blew me away. It really did. So yeah, when we think about it, I mean, what what God has created is just, it's just mind boggling. It really is. So I'd like to shift gears a little bit, you know, again, we talked before we hit the record button here, Jeff. And just so the audience knows. The reason why I'm having you on is because I want people to know that a belief in God is grounded upon solid science and solid reason. And it's my contention. And people that listen to this show on a regular basis know this, but if you're just checking the Show out, that we maximize our health potential when we align our lives more fully with God's natural design for spirit, mind, and body, but you're not going to be real, all anxious to submit yourselves to God's design, if you don't believe in God, or if you do believe in Him, that you have reason not to trust him. So I would like to spend some time just digging unpacking that a little bit about how trustworthy God is. And if you don't mind, Jeff, I'd like to just kind of play the devil's advocate and ask you a few of the challenging questions that are out there about the Christian faith and You know, from an astrophysics point of view, you're, I'm assuming you have not been to Bible College. Is that correct?

J

Jeff Zweerink 20:05

I have not. I've studied the Bible, but I've not had any formal training.

D

David Sandstrom 20:09

Okay. Yeah, same with me. No formal training and the Bible is just, you know, my own study, you know, reading books and in go to the word on my own. But anyway, let's, let's, let's dig in a couple of these. I think this would be of interest to some people. So one of the objections you hear about the Christian faith is, oh, you believe in the Bible? Hmm. Yeah, sure I do is well, the Bible has been disproven does this full of contradictions. It was written by man 1000s of years ago, it can't possibly be accurate has been translated so many times. It's not accurate. What would you say to that, Jeff?

J

Jeff Zweerink 20:43

Well, I think there's a number of things that are part of that question. One is, are there contradictions where part of the Bible says one thing and part of the Bible says something else? So that that's a question of internal consistency? There's part of that that's a question of how reliably? Can we say that what we have is the Bible now is what was originally written, which is a different question. And I think there are good answers to both of those. One is that we've got manuscripts that date, you know, like for the New Testament, we got manuscripts that date back to the first and second century, which is not too long after the New Testament was written. And so we look at those original manuscripts what we have now and there's a very good degree of what we have aligns with what was there, it's not like, there's just bits and pieces where we got this translation, we hope it's right, we've got lots of fragments of all the sections of the New Testament. And we're very convinced that we have a reliable picture of what the original authors wrote. And it's similar sort of thing for the Old Testament. So there's a lot of evidence for that, in fact, unless I'm incorrect in my memory, the amount of evidence manuscript evidence for the train, or for what the new, the new and old Testament say is far beyond what we have for any other ancient book. And we put a lot of stock in what we read in these other ancient books. So we're very confident that what the Bible says is what the original authors wrote. Now, there's a different question there of internal consistency. And this is something Christians have been talking about for a long time, one that was raised for that kind of troubled me is, you know, David, one of the heroes of the Old Testament, undertook this census. And in one of the descriptions in Kings, and Chronicles and Samuel where it's talked about one description, God caused David to give the census. And then the other one, Satan inspired David to give the census and it's like, here, you've got this same thing, one being ascribed to God, one being ascribed to Satan. And so that's looked at as a contradiction. Well, I do think in all of those, one of the things that's important to do, and I find this principle actually plays out in the way I do my science as well, is that things that look contradictory, we got to make sure and ask, is it a real contradiction? Or is it something where we're looking at things from a different perspective, or where we one gives a higher level explanation, a lower level explanation? And when you look at scripture, one thing that's clear is that nothing happens outside of God's control that he is a sovereign God, that's part of his sovereignty. And so whether Satan inspired David, ultimately, God's going to be the one who's in control of everything. And so, so there's to say that's a contradiction means that what was said in one passage, and what said another passage are saying A and not A are both true. At the same time, that would be a logical contradiction. When you look at that particular one, you've got both of those God is displeased with David for doing that one is emphasizing that Satan, it was a rebellion against God that inspired David to do this. And the other one is saying, you know, God's in control of everything. And so it may seem like it's a contradiction, but every

contradiction I've heard out there thus far, and again, I haven't looked at all of them. But every one I've looked at, in depth, it's like, okay, when you actually get in, it's, it's not a contradiction. It's something that gives a more expansive knowledge of what's going on. And again, I find that exactly same principle in operation, how we look, scientifically, there are things where we measure it this way, and it says X, we measure it this way, and it says Y and says, All right, well, we've got to figure out because they there's this belief that they're saying the same thing. And so that encourages us to dig deeper and understand more completely. And when we do that, every place of science so far, the contradiction has been resolved. And I found that in Scripture as well.

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David Sandstrom 24:44

Yeah, very good. You know what another point that comes to mind along those lines is, if you read the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, there are minor differences in the same stories being shared. And the contrary to what some people would point to as contradictions, it actually as adds more depth to the story. You know, if you had two people walking down the sidewalk on opposite sides of the road, and it was a car accident, and then you interviewed each person, you would get slightly different descriptions of that same event. They both saw car accident, but they both saw it slightly differently. Same thing is true when you watch a sports team, you know, close call it second base, of course, you know, your team probably had the advantage on that little close call, right? That's the way you tend to see it. So rather than discredit the Bible, I think it actually adds depth and more validity to the Bible that the disciples simply wrote what they saw as they saw it, and that's, that's really cool. You know, another quick point, then I want to get into more of the astrophysics part. But you know, if you were going to conspire in in write a book that would, you know, start a movement, you would not have written it the way the Bible is written, because the Bible characters are very fallible. They're, you know, there are a lot of characters in the Bible that are not to becoming they're not the type of people you think would inspire a movement. But once again, the Bible just simply describes what actually happened. And it adds depth to the validity of the Holy Word. And, you know, I think it's a cool concept, you know?

J

Jeff Zweerink 26:23

Well, I think it gives a, an accurate picture of how the world works. I mean, you'd love to think that Christians because they follow God, they just always get things right. And they don't struggle. And the reality of it is, we're sinners. Like, just because I believe that God created me, humanity rebelled, and Christ's death on the cross brings reconciliation between myself and God. I have a hard time living that out consistently, even on my best days, even though it may look like I still know what's going on in my mind. And, and I wrestle with that, and that's part of what's going on that the Bible gives us a good description of the beauty of humanity, the glory of humanity, but also the depravity of humanity.

D

David Sandstrom 27:05

Right. Right. Right. And we've got to find a balance between the two, right? I mean, we are meeting God's great image. But we also have a side of us that's, you know, a depraved side and the, you can call it the flesh or the carnal nature. So there's, we got to find the balance, I

think you'd be out of balance, too, to spend too much time camped out on either one of those concepts. We live in the middle, we live in the tension between the two. So that's good stuff. So. So Jeff, moving on another question. This is another common one, you know, I believe Jesus existed and he was a good teacher, probably a prophet even, but he wasn't God. Can you speak to that one a little bit?

J Jeff Zweerink 27:47

Well, in a, there's a number, again, a number of aspects to where that is, you can ask the question, who did Jesus say he was? There are very clear places where Jesus is claiming to be God, so he claimed to be God. And if he's lying about that, you have to question whether he's actually a good teacher or not. If he's lying fundamentally about who he is. The Jewish people took his claims to be him claiming to be God. So it's not just something where we're kind of 20th century reading, but 21st century reading it back in. But that was why he was crucified is that he claimed to be God, you know. So that's, that's not a small thing. But you again, look at what he did and what he said and how he lived. He was historians, and again, to my to my, as I've read and interacted with experts on this field, historians agree that Jesus was a person who actually lived, that he was a Jew, he lived in the time that he said he did that he was crucified for the reasons that he claimed, and the disciples afterwards believed that he had risen from the dead. And so you can make those claims that oh, Jesus wasn't actually God. But He claimed to be God. And he did miracles that validated His claim to be God, and he's done the one thing that no human has ever done, and that is risen from the dead. And had people witness it, and their lives be changed because of it. So people can make that claim, but the evidence doesn't seem to line up with that claim.

D David Sandstrom 29:25

Yeah, absolutely. You know, and for those that are familiar, you know, one of the examples of that was, after Jesus was crucified and buried. The Jews that I mean, not the while they were Jews, but the followers of Jesus Christ, the disciples, they were they were in fear, they thought they'd be next. So they were hiding out. And then you know, the resurrected Jesus shows up and completely transformed their approach. And they became emboldened and they started declaring the truth of the resurrection on the street corners and mountaintops. You know, What could have possibly caused that kind of a turnaround, except that they encountered the resurrected Jesus Christ. And again, you would not have written the Bible that way. If you were conspiring together to write something false, you would never make it. So Astonishingly, the disciples so astonishingly vulnerable. And so, you know, frail, really. So it's an interesting point. You know, you mentioned miracles, and I think that's another one of the criticisms of the faith is like, Oh, well, you know, we live in we live in a scientific world here, guy, come on, come on, you really believe in miracles? What would what would you say to that one, Jeff?

J Jeff Zweerink 30:39

Well, it's a Absolutely I mean, I am very much committed to us. But science is a great tool for understanding how this world works. I think we have this wrong conception, that a miracle is something that is unexplainable by science. And when you look throughout Scripture, there are different types of miracles. There are miracles where God works beyond the laws of physics. I

think bringing the universe into existence bringing humanity into existence are those are instances where it's not just nature, you know, the way things naturally work can't explain those phenomena. I think the resurrection is another example of working beyond the laws of physics. Yeah. But there are often times where miracles are, have a some sense of physical explanation, but nonetheless are miraculous, I think of the Israelites in the crossing of the Red Sea. Now you read the, you read the scripture in there, and God led the Israelites out of Egypt. And he's leading them with the pillar of fire and the pillar of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire at night. And he leads them up into a militarily awful position of boxing them in with this big body of water on the backside here, the Egyptians come chasing at them. And then you read what it says in Scripture and a strong wind blew through the night. Now, if this was God, just saying, Okay, let's move the waters. Why is there this description of a strong wind blowing? Well, interestingly, when you look at how what a strong wind can do, there are studies I can point to in the scientific literature, that given the geometry of a large tributary flowing into a large lake or sea, at the right angle, a strong wind will cause this setback, which will open up for about six to eight hours, a two to three mile swath of dry land. Well, you got the nation of Israel marching across that can get get through there, get the million or so people across in six to eight hours, and then it's going to come crashing back in. That's kind of a remarkable description of what are that's a possible description of what happened, the way the Bible is described in the Bible. So I have this explanation of the miracle. But nonetheless, it's still miraculous. And I find science is a way to go out and study the world. There are times where things that are described in the Bible that we include, say is miraculous, often, they do have this component where we can understand. I'll give you one example, one example of a place where this plays out, I think the origin of life is a miraculous event. There's just so many things that would need to happen. And so somebody asked me if you know you're there, right at the origin of life, what would you expect to see? And my suspicion is what I would see is all of these chemicals working around coming together, and life arising because of that, but it would be in such a, why did that happen here? How did all of this stuff happened right at the same place, because it's not what I would expect. So I can understand it, but it would still look miraculous, because it's not what I would expect. And so I see science and Christian and miracles, there are two parts of trying to understand the truth of what God has revealed. The Bible tells us that God has done miraculous things. Science helps us understand His revelation and creation. And sometimes both of those point to the miraculous nature of events that have happened.

D David Sandstrom 34:11

Yeah, absolutely. So, um, what would you say? And I know there's a lot of them, but pick a couple of your favorites about some of the Creation miracles that make life here on earth possible. You know, for instance, our temperature or the oxygen or water freezing at 32 degrees I you know, Can you can you point to a couple of those that just make make the, the pure chance theory behind evolution, you know, just hard to hard to buy.

J Jeff Zweerink 34:42

When I look at the sum total of what it takes to make a universe that is habitable and a planet that is habitable, and to actually introduce life, it just screams of a divine plan. You know, we live in a universe Big Bang cosmology, our universe started in this incredibly hot, dense state. After the first three or four minutes, basically the only elements in the universe were hydrogen and helium. Hydrogen is a very important element to life, helium is kind of inconsequential as

far as life goes. But if you're gonna get all the other elements are produced in stars, and two of the most important elements are carbon and oxygen. And when astronomers go and look and ask the question, what does it take to produce the carbon and oxygen we see in our universe? It turns out, there's a number of very miraculous coincidences, I will use the that term because for carbon to form, what has to happen is you have to take one helium nucleus to helium nucleus and three helium nuclei, and get them to all joined together because a carbon nucleus is three helium nuclei put together. Well, the first thing that needs to happen is that there's a you can take carbon to helium nuclei, and they'll come together and they'll stay together for a while. It's not stable, in that it will stick around forever, but it sticks around for a lot longer. That enables that, that that extra time enables a third nucleus to come in and make carbon. And so if that ate those two helium nuclei together, we're not sort of stable, but not really stable, you would not have the carbon that we have in our universe. And so that's one little amazing coincidence that's predicated on the laws of physics. Yeah, well, even to get to get carbon, now you've got to have that third helium, or that third helium come in. But for that to work efficiently, carbon has to have a certain energy level to it, and it's just above its ground state. And so it actually speeds up that whole process makes a whole lot more carbon produced, which carbon is one of the top four abundant elements in our universe because of that phenomena. But you need not only carbon, but you need oxygen, so that same phenomenon that allows that carbon to form adding one more helium, if you add one more helium, you get oxygen. Well, if oxygen had that same sort of excited energy level, that carbon does, all of the carbon would turn into oxygen. And so you've got these three amazing coincidences of to helium are kind of stable, but not really, there's a proper energy level and carbon. And oxygen doesn't have that to produce a universe where for two of the five most abundant elements in the universe are carbon and oxygen, even though they shouldn't be. And so just in the very laws of physics, we see that this universe is designed to produce the building blocks of life. And so that's just part of you go to finding the right kind of planet and having it form and having it large enough that it can hold on to water, but not more poisonous gases to where you can have a stable water cycle. With long standing plate tectonics, and all of these things. It really looks like God has orchestrated things to put us here, and made us here to enjoy it. And Earth is teeming with life, compared to Venus and Mars, which are habitable planets, by many definitions, and they're just devoid of life. So we see a lot of evidence pointing to the creators work and making sure we're here.

D

David Sandstrom 38:22

Yeah, absolutely. You know, I'd like to point out one of my favorites is water in the lake in a lake or the ocean will freeze from the top down. And that's because water has the property that as it approaches 32 degrees, it becomes a little less dense, it rises to the top so the cold water settles to the top of the lake therefore, the lake freezes over from the top now and a layer of ice acts like a blanket to keep the rest of the water at a stable temperature if the lake flows froze from the bottom up all the all the vegetation and therefore all this all the life in lake fish would would die in the wintertime, isn't it convenient? The water has that property.

J

Jeff Zweerink 39:06

And not only does it have that property, very few other liquids other compounds have that property water is unusual in that and not only does it have that it's got a real high heat capacity, real high thermal capacity. I mean, it's got so many other properties it is It's like

somebody designed water to be the basis in which the biochemistry of life can happen. It's almost like somebody designed it that way.

D

David Sandstrom 39:32

You can say that again. You know, I tell people that believe in evolution that you know it all happened by accident. So a couple of huge problems with that. And that is when you look around if a child can do this, when you look around you see design everywhere. You know if you look at a tree that's basically you know, water at the bottom of Christmas tree shape and narrow at the top or or maybe it has an oval shape to it, you know as viewed from a distance. Well this this search tree there. But if you took a single branch from that tree, you might see some odd angles and some, you know, seemingly random progression of the growth of this branch. But put it all together in the big picture. And you've got beautiful symmetry, to the family consistent with that family of tree, there's design there, and a child can see it. And if you were walking on the beach, and you saw a Rolex watch in the sand, you wouldn't say, Oh, look, what the wind and the waves produced over maybe millions of years, a watch appeared. That would be nonsense, right? We'd say, somebody made that watch and left it here. And I found it, you know, the way you see design, there must be a designer. And to not acknowledge that is really, I get us a harsh word here. But you bury your head in the sand in the sand to think that everything we see happen by accident. And the other, the other huge thing that the atheist can't get over is, well, what if matter is all there is, then where did matter come from? And as you just eloquently described, there, there was if you could be there as a witness to creation, you'd see some incredible, miraculous design to it all. It couldn't possibly have happened by accident. Do you have anything to add to that?

J

Jeff Zweerink 41:27

I would just say this is a place again, when you look at what Christianity has to say it provides a good explanation for the way the world works and the way people behave. You know, you quoted from, or mentioned in Romans one earlier. And in Romans one, what it says is that the evidence for God is evident in creation, it's not like, you have to go hunt and find it. It's just there to see. But we tend to suppress that knowledge and want to do something else. And I just find that a very apt description, when God's asking me or saying, Hey, do something I don't want, I tend to suppress what he says. And so you know, I mean, I see the skeptic or the ACS, saying, oh, there's no evidence for God that I see it. That's just the same sort of tendency I have to suppress where God's asking something I don't want, I want to suppress that. And so the Bible provides an accurate, good description of who we are as people and how we respond to the truth that sometimes we don't want the truth. And so we find many ways to suppress it.

D

David Sandstrom 42:29

Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. I see it all the time. I think that's another great topic. How would you define truth? What's the origin? Is there such thing as ultimate truth? And if there is, where does it come from?

J

Jeff Zweerink 42:45

That is a philosophical question far bigger than what I can talk. But I say, as a Christian, I would say all truth originates in God that God is the ultimate reality. And what he's done is the basis by which things are determined true or false. And kind of an analogy I would give to that there's I know, there's this idea out there today that either, you know, there's you kind of there's this truth, and it's, we find it through science. And that's the only way to do it. Or even the idea that we all kind of come up with their own truth. But what I love about science, one of the things that attracts me to science, is there's a fairness about it, and a rigidness about it, the fairness is that anybody can come in and say, Hey, I see what this data is. And here's my explanation for it. Every explanation is welcome at the table, as long as it accounts for the data that's there. So it's not like, well, Jeff's wearing gets to have explanations, because he's done so much training or, you know, I just weren't gets that explanations, because he's white, or male or anything, it has nothing to do with that. If you've got an explanation that accounts for the data, your explanation has a place at the table. But then there's also this rigidness about it, that it just because I come up with an explanation, doesn't mean it's right. Science has this desire and drive to go out and say, Alright, here's the explanation. How can we test if it's true? And the test is? Do we do experiments? And does it explain the future data? does it align with the reality of the world? And so scientists operate as though as there's this reality out there? There's this external standard by which we're judging things against, and we're coming up with our explanations. We're asking do they align with that? Now, as a Christian, what I'm saying is God has revealed himself in creation and so we're aligning our explanations with the truth that God is revealed in his revelation. But science. What I love about the about the way it works is that anybody can participate in proposing Being explanations and offering the test. But nobody gets to decide what's true or false. The data or the explanation that aligns with the reality of the world. That's what's the true or at least closer to the truth and getting us closer and closer. Those are the good explanations, not just because I want to because I'm powerful, because I'm disadvantaged whatever. Yeah, the world is the arbiter. And that world is a reflection of God's truth. And so that's kind of a long, maybe a little bit long winded, circuitous answer. But I do think there's truth ultimately flows from God. And that's what science is about is how do we find that truth? In amongst all the other weird explanations? Yeah,

D

David Sandstrom 45:39

I agree with you. It's, it's, it's, it's been clouded. As of late, there's been a lot of challenge to this idea of truth. In, you know, it's an age old question, you know, when Jesus was under on his trial, and Pontius Pilate said, Don't you realize I have the power to free you? And he says that, you know, Jesus says something to the effect of law, I testify to the truth. And Pontius Pilate says, what is truth? And that's a good question, actually. And I would add to what you said, I agree what you said and I, but I would I would add to that, is that, yes, God created everything, and his nature and character are all over his creation. If a carpenter built a table, when he was done building it, his fingerprints would be all over that table. When God created the physical world, the physical universe that we can observe, in his fingerprints are all over it. And and they are, as you said, based in God's nature and character. And I would say that a simple way of putting it is, something is true if it's consistent with the nature and character of God. And if it's not, then it's false. So in other words, Adultery is wrong, because God is faithful. murder is wrong, because God is the author of life. lying is wrong, because God is true. God is truth. So we, that's our measure, that's our God is our benchmark guard is the plumbob that we measure all truth from, and if we can't line it up with, with, with God's nature and character, then we can we can say it's not true. So that for me, that's the basis of truth, and the atheist. If you deny that God exists, then if you want to live your life with that worldview, then there is no ultimate

standard by which we can judge right and wrong, or somewhere whether or not something's true or false. So the moral relativism is the best they can come up with, you know, whatever you feel like whatever you define truth to be, then that's true. And I would suggest that that's just, you know, it can't be right. Because if people are going to have differences of opinion, and truth is appropriate for all people, all places, in all times, it's fixed, it doesn't change. I love there's a, there's a shipping company. I'm trying to think of the name of them. But I see their trucks, their 18 wheelers on the road all the time. And they have a great slogan, it says, We should RL Carriers, that's the name of them. And their slogan is, we'll ship anything, anywhere, anytime. And I like yeah, that's a perfect description of God's truth. His truth is appropriate for all people, all places, at all times. It's not, it's not something we invent. It's something we discover truth was around before I got here, and it's going to be around a long time after a long time after I leave this earth because it's fixed because it's, it's based in eternal nature and character of God Himself.

J Jeff Zweerink 48:49

Amen. And the extent to which we align our lives with that truth. And I would even go bigger to the extent a society aligns itself with those truths, it will flourish and blossom because of that, because it's operating as a person and as a society, the way God has designed for them to operate. I think part of the danger we're in now, particularly in America is that we have a lot of these truths that we think are self evident, that are actually flow out of the Judeo Christian worldview. And we're undermining the Judeo Christian worldview and yet wanting to maintain these values, if you will. And, you know, I'm a little anxious is not the right word. But I don't think that's going to turn out well, unless we decide to realign ourselves with God's truth and God's standard. And I think that's the healthiest way for us to live and I want what's good for our country. I think that's the healthiest way for our country to operate.

D David Sandstrom 49:50

Well, absolutely. And we should be teaching our young people that you know, you can there's people I have good friends that are solid believers and mature Christians that believe that, you know, we are not a Christian nation. And we they are there was a lot of Freemasonry back then in the 1700s. And there were there were deists, who were signers of the Constitution, framers of the Constitution who are Diaz. And that's all true. But they were all educated in a Judeo Christian worldview. And that's the difference. Even the atheists were educated in that system, you know, based on Judeo Christian truth. And, you know, it's very, very different from what we see today. You know, we stripped God out of the public schools and, and you know, anything goes, you know, you can, you can you can hang up a picture of a witch and practicing witchcraft on a, you know, a fifth grade wall. But, you know, don't dare write a report about Jesus Christ that you get kicked out of school for that, you know, it's a shame, it really is a shame. It's not, it's not a good path that we're on as a nation. Jeff, I have one more question for you. And we're running out of time here. But I have one more question. I think a lot of people might be hoping that we that we tackle this one, because it's a big one that a lot of people's minds. And that is, if God is good, and he's all loving, why does He allow all these bad things to happen? You know, either either he's not capable of doing anything about it, or he's not all powerful, as you say? Or maybe he just doesn't care. You know, what would you say to that? Why do bad things happen to good people if God exists?

 J

Jeff Zweerink 51:27

That is a question that theologians and philosophers have been thinking about for decades and millennia. So I'm not going to claim I've got the answer. It's a challenging question. And, and I see that question having two sides. One is to the person who is going through something tough. There's a pastoral response of joining with them in the challenge, they're walking through supporting and encouraging them, helping them out physically, if they've got needs to care for and take care of the person. There's an academic side to that question, which is, you know, how could a God who's all powerful, all loving and all good, allow something like that to happen? And that's the answering the academic, or giving the academic answer to the person in the midst of a struggle is not the right way to do it. But getting involved in the emotional tension is not the right way to answer the academic question, either. And the question or to answer that question, I think we need to have a genuine understanding of who God is and how he operates. And just personally, I want to be careful not to impose my limitations on who God is. And the example I would give is, there's many times as my kids were growing up, where I would make a rule and say, Hey, no, you can't do this, or whatever. And I'm certain that many times they thought I was being harsh, cruel, I let something happen to them where they got hurt, right. And to the extent I'm, I'm fallible and error as a human, but I wanted my kids to grow up and mature. And sometimes I let challenge things happen to them, because that would help them grow. I would push them in to do physically hard things, because they needed to get stronger, I would let them walk through emotionally challenging situations, because that way they would get they would mature. And I would push them into spiritually challenging situations, because that will help them grow in their walk with God. And so I think part of the answer to that is that I think God wants what's best for us to grow. And he's less concerned about our comfort. Yeah. Somehow in God's economy, and this is beyond my explanation, but he has decided that me having a capacity to choose do good or bad to follow his will rebel against that is a good thing. That's part of how he created us, Adam and Eve in the garden with a perfect everything they could possibly want, still chose to rebel against God, God created them knew they were going to rebel, and still created them anyway. So none of the stuff that's going on in the world has caught God by surprise. Or God said, Well, I wanted it that way. But it just didn't work out. It's no God knew this was what was going to happen. And no amount coupled in with that the worst thing we've experienced, his son experienced that and worse on the cross. So God is I think God is far more interested in drawing us into a deep relationship with him than He is in making sure everything is comfortable for us. And that goes along with allowing us to be able to argue that God doesn't exist the angelic realm. When they rebelled, there was no chance of redemption. When we rebelled, but God built in a way to redeem us as well. And so I don't begin to have an answer. It's like, okay, here's the final answer to all this. What I do know is that God, in and of himself is relational needs not create anybody to love and care. And in and of himself, he is complete needs nothing, yet he chose to create us, knowing that we would rebel, that the Redemption was his son, dying on the cross are horrific, awful death. And he did all that, because he wanted me to have a relationship with Him, He wanted you to have a relationship with him. And he wanted every one of your listeners and everybody who might ever hear this podcast and everybody across the world to have a relationship with Him. And yet he respects and gives us the choice to actually have that relationship or not. Yeah, that doesn't answer it entirely. But it does seem to me that that's all if that's what God is about, then I can see why there could be very difficult and awful things. Because there are forces at work that want to rebel against God. And they're working hard to do that. And that explains a lot of evil that goes on in the world.



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D David Sandstrom 56:14

Yeah, I agree. You know, and this is a really tough one, as you said, for someone who's say, just lost a loved one to cancer, you know, or worship, maybe a murderer, you know, it's a tough one to tackle. And I think he did a good job with that, I think you I don't have much to add to that. Except to say that love can only be freely given, it can't be coerced or taken. So therefore God has given each human being a free will, hoping in hopes that we would choose to love and follow Him, and offer our love. He loves us unconditionally. And he's his desire is that we love him back, we reflect that love and goodness to a lost and dying world. And then we love him back through worship and devotion to Him. So He and He preserves that in each human being, He preserves that freewill. If he took freewill away, then we wouldn't be able to enter into the fullness of a love relationship with our Creator that He desires most. He wants loving relationship, he doesn't want robots. He doesn't want Automatron he doesn't want servants. He wants lovers. And because free will is necessary for love than that allows that opens the door for evil. And And if God were to shut that door, he would also be shutting the door to loving relationships as well. So I know it's not a full explanation either. But you know, it's a tough one.

J Jeff Zweerink 57:42

If I can be honest, how could God be all loving, all powerful and all good? That doesn't trouble me? Yeah, there's the emotional struggles of the tensions and the hard things I go through and the people that I know that they've gone through that's hard to deal with. Yeah. But as a, a, how can I reconcile these things? How could a God who's in control of everything, create beings who have free will? That is a mind boggling question is,

D David Sandstrom 58:13

knowing what that free will would bring?

J Jeff Zweerink 58:17

Oh, yeah, the consequent. And why would God do? That is another thing. But yeah, but how can a God who's in control everything create beings that have free will? And in some sense, the answer to that is going to be that God, though he's in control of everything, will create this set of rules that he is going to choose to honor. And so in choosing the honor that you get people like Adolf Hitler, he could step in and stop that. But that's not allowing the free will to play out the way he's designed it. And so I trust that He is good, even if it means I'm going to be going through some difficult times, because he's the one who has the understanding, not me.

D David Sandstrom 58:58

Right? Yeah. So I think, you know, my personal opinion is God does restrain evil, and he does stop bad things from happening. But if he did it all the time, then he would be violating the very essence of what it is to be a human being. And again, to enter into our free will love relationship. So it's a difficult concept, but one worth exploring. We'll talk about I appreciate your thoughts on that. Jeff, this has been this has been fascinating. We could talk all afternoon. There's so much more to cover. There's so much depth to this, this topic that we're covering

here. Again, this episode is created in hopes that if you have some questions about the Christian faith, if you have something that's holding you back from surrendering to God's love and goodness, I hope that the Jeff and I have been able to shed some light on some of those doubts and maybe give you some concrete something to put a handle on to your faith and and really look into spending more time deepening your relationship with God Himself, I think that's the you won't be sorry. And by the way, the nice fringe benefit to that is your health will improve. You know, that's, that's cool. And we worship Him because He's worthy of our worship. But in the meantime, we get the benefit of improved more peace, more love. And more, you know, more. I don't have time to get to wrap this up. But you know, we're spending more time in the parasympathetic side of our nervous system, as opposed to the sympathetic the, the fight or flight, which our bodies will struggle with. If we spent too much time in there, we're meant to go into it, press into stress, and then back out, that's the way our bodies are designed. If we spent too much time in that fight or flight or sympathetic side, it's going to interfere with our cellular repair or detoxification, in our bodies in our vitality will suffer as a result. So we do things God's way we enjoy more love, joy and peace. That's all health promoting, I hope, I hope I've connected the dots here probably should have spent a little more time building that bridge here. Maybe I'll do it as an intro before the episode goes live. But Jeff, Jeff, he has a number of books out, one of them is called escaping the beginning is there life out there? And who's afraid of the multiverse? And you've also co authored impact events for students devotional. So Jeff is someone says, you know, I like this guy's message. I'd like to get a hold of him and, you know, check out some of his work. What's the best way to get a hold of you, Jeff?

J Jeff Zweerink 1:01:32

Best way to get check out the work is go to reasons.org There is a wealth of stuff to get there. I'm on social media, Facebook, Twitter, RGB Underscore js wearing, follow me are there to connect up with me there and we can chat. All right,

D David Sandstrom 1:01:47

I'll make sure to put some, some links in the show notes to all that and this is going to be episode 101. That's going to be davidsandstrom.com. Forward slash 101. Jeff, thank you so much for being here and sharing your wisdom with the National nation. Thanks, David

J Jeff Zweerink 1:02:02

really enjoyed our conversation today.

D David Sandstrom 1:02:04

Me too. Well, I hope you enjoyed that conversation with Jeff is wearing he's just a wealth of knowledge. And if you know someone who is the intellectual type and is asking some questions about the faith, would you refer him to this podcast? This is episode 101. And I think that God would enjoy using this to answer some questions and squats, some doubts that people may be having about fully surrendering to God's love and goodness. And remember, on the show notes

page, you can listen to an audio as well as watch a video version of the podcast. I include links to all the resources that we mentioned, as well as a downloadable transcript. And I always include some type of a content upgrade to help you go deeper with that subject. And as I announced a couple of episodes ago, we're going to be going to every other week format. So look for the next episode coming out two weeks from today. That's it for now. Thank you for listening, and I'll talk with you in two weeks. Take care and be blessed.