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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

May 21, 2023

Ask Me Anything Week #6 / Pastor Peter Pizzuto

Hasn't Science Disproved Christianity?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. It's the final week of the Spring Quarter for Community Groups! Use the following questions to reflect, celebrate, and look ahead.
 - a) Reflect on the first five months of 2023. What has God taught you and where have you grown in your faith? How has the Community Group supported you?

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<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/414675>

- b) What have you appreciated about and/or learned from other people in group? If you have a word of encouragement, share it publicly (or privately) with them!

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11 (NLT) - ¹⁰Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

- c) The Summer Quarter (June through August) is one of encouraged rest. What are the group's plans for the summer? How can you stay connected?
- d) The Fall Quarter begins in September. Does your group plan to continue meeting in the Fall? If yes, are there any changes you'd like to implement? For example - shared group leadership, logistical changes (day, time, childcare plans), welcoming new group members, increased focus on prayer, etc.

2. In his book *When Science Meets Religion*, Ian Barbour presented four models for how science and religion may be related to each other:
 - o Conflict | Science and religion are in conflict. This view assumes that either science or religion is true while the other is necessarily false, and thus the perspectives of each will be in conflict.
 - o Independence | Both science and religion can be true, but in different domains. This view assumes that science and religion focus on different things, so as long as each keeps to its own domain, it can yield truth in that domain.
 - o Dialogue | Science and religion can be conversation partners, as they both contain truth about many things. This view doesn't assume that science and religion are the same, but that there is enough overlap in what they focus on to mutually inform one another about truths.
 - o Integration | The truths of science and religion can be integrated into a larger whole. This view assumes that the best way to understand the world is through an integration of science and religion, because they are complementary modes of knowing the truth about reality.

Do any of Barbour's models reflect your understanding of the relationship between science and religion? If yes, explain. If not, how would you summarize your beliefs?

3. Read Psalm 8:1-4, Psalm 19:1-4, and Romans 1:20. Have you learned anything about yourself and/or experienced God through the natural world? If so, share about that. Is connecting with God through nature a big part of your relationship with Him?

Psalm 8:1-4 (NIV) – ¹Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. ²Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. ³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

Psalm 19:1-4 (NIV) – ¹The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

Romans 1:20 (NIV) – 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.

DIVING DEEPER

4. Read Hebrews 11:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:5-10. Then discuss the connected questions.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) – Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

2 Corinthians 5:5-10 (NIV) – ⁵Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

a) How would you explain the meaning of Christian faith? Do you feel that it’s more “believing without seeing” (i.e., blind faith) or “trust based on evidence?”

b) How does believing that science has totally disproved Christianity (or any other religious belief in God) also require an act of faith?

5. Pastor Peter shared four reasons to believe God, Jesus, and Christianity are true. Review those below and then discuss the corresponding questions.

1) Something from nothing (explaining the very existence of the universe and life)

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV) – By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

2) Evidence from design (complexity of life and the fine tuning of the universe)

“I see an orderly, beautiful universe in which nearly all physical phenomena can be understood from a few simple mathematical equations. I see a universe that, had it been

constructed slightly differently, would never have given birth to stars and planets, let alone bacteria and people. And there is no good scientific reason for why the universe should not have been different. Many good scientists have concluded from these observations that an intelligent God must have chosen to create the universe with such beautiful, simple, and life-giving properties. Many other equally good scientists are nevertheless atheists. Both conclusions are positions of faith.” - William Phillips, Nobel Prize-winning physicist

3) Truths from morals

“Science has its place—a vital one—in modern society. We can all benefit from the knowledge we have gained through the scientific method first devised by Christian scholars. But if we elevate scientific truth above all other kinds and believe that the scientific script rules out other stories, we have no grounds for morality and no basis for—in Dawkins’s formulation—rebellling against our genes. We are bags of cells and waste with an expiration date, and it doesn’t mean anything.” - Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*

4) Life from death - the resurrection of Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NIV) - ³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

a) Which of these reasons resonates with you the most and strengthens your belief in God and relationship with Jesus? Why?

b) Were any of these reasons new to you? If so, did hearing them have any impact as you consider the intersection of science and Christian faith?

TAKING IT HOME

6. Matthew 28:1-10,16-20 records Jesus’ resurrection and the disciples’ initial reactions to Jesus when He appears to them. Read this passage and study it together.

Matthew 28:1-10,16-20 (NIV) - ¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” ⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

a) What two responses do the disciples have when they encounter the resurrected Jesus on the mountain in Galilee?

b) Is having doubt and/or wrestling with questions necessarily a bad thing if you're a follower of Jesus Christ? Explain your answer.

c) Are you comfortable with not knowing everything about the interaction of the natural and supernatural and still worshipping God, or do your questions hold you back from fully worshipping God?

Group Prayer Reminder / As you conclude for the Spring, don't forget to pray together!

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Alpha at Rivers Crossing | Whether you're skeptical, exploring faith, or wrestling with doubt, Alpha is a safe place for you to bring your questions and connect with others. Our next Alpha class will take place this summer, from June 15th - August 3rd. Learn more about Alpha and register for the summer class at the link below:
<https://riverscrossing.com/alpha/>
2. Preteen Extreme | Who is ready to Race to the Extraordinary this summer at Preteen Extreme? Sign your preteen up now for an experience they'll remember for a lifetime at Preteen Extreme on Saturday, June 17th at Camp Kern. They will conquer an obstacle course, seek out the cross, work together to canoe, aim at archery, grow in community with their small group, and much more! Learn more and register at <https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1639769>
3. New Community Group Leaders | Interested in leading your own Community Group or have anyone you believe would make a great Community Group leader? If yes, we'd love the opportunity to connect with you or them and share more about our vision for groups at Rivers Crossing. We're always looking to create more space for people to experience and grow in the extraordinary life together!

New Group Leader Interest Form:

<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/414625>.