



# LOVING SCIENCE,

## STARTING WITH THE FACTS OF GOD'S WORD AND WORLD,

**C**hristians generally agree that evangelizing unbelievers, serving other believers, and worshipping God are worthwhile activities. But what about the sciences—especially those with little to no practical use to humanity? Is there value in puzzling over hollow trunks of fossil trees or craters on distant planets? We believe so. In fact, we believe science is an essential activity of the church.

### Why Do Science?

As stated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “The chief end of man is to glorify God.” We accomplish this in several ways.

One is by acknowledging God for Who He is and what He does. The creation is His craftsmanship. In the same

way that we can appreciate a craftsman by what he makes and win new followers by praising His work, we can glorify God by studying His creation, recognizing His hand in His work, and sharing what we learn with others.

Geology is just one small example. The study of the earth gives us insight into the powerful and destructive geological forces of the past. When we recognize the forces that God unleashed during the Flood because of His intolerance of sin, we grow in our appreciation of God's holiness, and we cannot help but be drawn into worship of Him. We also feel an increased burden to share Him with others.

Another way we glorify God is by obeying Him. He tells us to seek wisdom (Proverbs 3:13–18). Since wisdom

requires knowledge, we must seek knowledge with extreme diligence and hard work, as a miner digs for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:2–5). Science is one important way to acquire knowledge. When used wisely, knowledge can bring further glory to God. For example, if we better understand the climate of the earth following Noah's Flood, we should be able to develop constructive and uniquely biblical ways to respond to global warming.

Also, when God created humans, He gave us dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26–28)—commanding us to care for it (Genesis 2:15) in cooperation with Him. The more we understand how creation works and what makes it work best, the better we can care for it.

Science applied to the earth and or-



# LOVING GOD

by Kurt Wise and Gregg Allison

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## WE FASHION MODELS TO KNOW GOD AND SEE HIS TRUTH.

ganisms helps us better rule the creation for God's glory. For example, as we better understand bacteria in earth systems, we should become more effective at cleaning up pollution and dealing with waste.

Furthermore, God gave us everything we have, and He will call us to account for our stewardship of those things (1 Timothy 6:20). We have been given coal, oil, and natural gas resources, for example, most of which were probably generated in the Flood. Have we wasted them? Are we making the best use of them? We must study how these resources came to be as part of God's larger purposes so that we can become the best stewards possible.

We further glorify God as we serve others. As human population increases,

for example, our demand for food and drinkable water increases. The rocks of the earth play an important role in the purification and circulation of water, as well as the generation and fertilization of soil. The study of the earth's rocks and how they came to be could potentially be used to provide food and water for needy people around the world.

God also commands us to be salt and light to the entire world (Matthew 5:13–16). This suggests that He calls some of us in the church to be scientists—to perform scientific research, attend scientific meetings, present papers—to carry God's truth directly to unbelievers in the scientific community.

Furthermore, since God speaks to people through the creation (Romans 1:18–20), the study of creation may

aid in the evangelization of the world. If Solomon drew from “all people” to hear him speak “of trees . . . , of beasts, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fish” (1 Kings 4:30–34), then perhaps we can also use science to draw people to God in our day.

### How to Do Science

Should the science of believers be different from the science of unbelievers? In many ways, no.

#### Follow biblical presuppositions

Among both believers and unbelievers, science makes sense only if we accept that certain things are true about the world. For example, the world must exist—otherwise, there is little value in studying it! The world must be orderly so that humans can

understand it. The world also must operate regularly everywhere and at all times. Human language must be able to describe the world. And so on.

These necessary assumptions are called the presuppositions of science. Happily enough for believers, all of science's presuppositions make sense if God created the physical world to demonstrate—among other things—His attributes to humans (as suggested in Romans 1:18–20). If God did create a world to teach us something, then the universe does exist, the universe has an order, that order is understandable to humans, and that order will exist everywhere and for as long as the creation exists.

Believers have good reason to believe the unproven assumptions that all scientists must believe in order to do science. It is no wonder that modern science was birthed by people who believed in a Creator.

#### **Follow biblical ethics**

The ethics of science also follows biblical ideals. Scientists are not to steal data or ideas from other scientists. Scientists are not to lie or fake data. And because we recognize the dangers of human depravity, we have our observations double-checked. That is, we want to share our scientific ideas for public examination and testing, submitting them to intense private and public scrutiny.

Scientists also value cooperation. They seek to develop theories that fit together with other theories, and they prize cooperative research and community-wide model development. This approach should be quite comfortable to believers, who are called to strive for unity (Ephesians 4:1–3).

Finally, in response to human fallibility, we recognize that scientific theories are always subject to change. Whereas observations of the physical world are absolute truths (data);

theories are only possible truths. We need to compare all theories with data and then change or reject the theories based on that data.

#### **Study biblical data first**

Believers and unbelievers not only share many of the same presuppositions and ethics, but they also use many of the same procedures of observation, theory-building, and experimentation.

The key difference comes for those who believe that we should accept the Bible's claims about the physical world as the primary source of absolute truth (data).<sup>1</sup> Since the God of Truth is the author of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), then every biblical claim is true, regardless of subject matter.

Unbelieving scientists build their theories based on the data of the physical world alone; believing scientists, in contrast, build their theories based on both the data of the physical world and the data of Scripture. Remembering the *why* of doing science, believing scientists study the facts of God's Word and the facts of God's world to develop theories for the glory of God.<sup>2</sup>

Because we are finite beings while God knows everything, then we should go to God first in our search for truth. As Solomon says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). So believing scientists wisely consider the biblical data first of all. Thus, believing scientists not only have more data to evaluate but they also have more authoritative data. If a theory contradicts the Bible, they know it must be wrong. This explains why believing scientists often reject certain theories out of hand, even if those theories happen to explain a lot of physical data—and even if they don't know any alternate explanation.

The biblical data, for example, forces us to reject the ancestral relatedness of all organisms and the great antiquity of things—even if such ideas seem to

explain a lot of data and even when we can't yet offer better theories for all that data. By rejecting these false, dead-end ideas right away, believing scientists are free to devote their full energy into seeking new, fertile ideas. With God's help, they have an opportunity to construct alternative theories that explain both biblical and physical-world data.

From these theories of science we can develop useful applications—new inventions that allow us to better serve others, better steward God's resources, and better rule over those things that God placed under us.

All of this effort brings greater glory to our God, as we more clearly demonstrate God's activity to unbelievers, as we increase our appreciation of His work on our behalf, and as we are overwhelmed with new reasons to worship Him unceasingly.

In the other pages of this issue you can see many examples of such fertile ideas, developed by modern scientific believers, including a mature creation, catastrophic sedimentation, floating forests, catastrophic plate tectonics, rapid glaciation, baraminology, and rapid speciation. These are all the product of believing science in action, with unlimited opportunities for more. ■

#### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> For the rest of the article, "believers" is used as shorthand for people who are Christians and believe that every biblical claim about the physical world is true.

<sup>2</sup> This is the rationale for the succinct definition of science given in the Creation Museum near Cincinnati: "Starting with the facts of God's Word and world, we fashion models to know God and see His truth."

**Dr. Kurt Wise** earned his PhD in geology from Harvard University and is now the professor of science and theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For a more complete biography, see the end of "Sinking a Floating Forest" on page 40.



**Dr. Gregg Allison** is Associate Professor of Christian Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has authored numerous articles and books. Dr. Allison is currently a book review editor for the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.



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