

Lessons from Science for Faith

On Sunday we concluded our sermon series on Faith & Science based on Dr. Francis Collins' best-selling book "The Language of God." Our focus on Sunday was two pivotal experiences described in Collin's book that helped him find God's will for his life.

1. Warm-up Question: Jeff began Sunday's sermon by describing his childhood experience on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride in Disneyland. What's the coolest amusement park ride you've ever experienced?
2. Mr. Toad's Wild Ride is based on a children's story about a toad who loved to drive his motorcar recklessly through the English countryside. The ride begins by crashing through the front doors of Toad Hall, followed by near missed with hatchets, sudden U-turns, on-coming vehicles, screeching brakes, warning signs, blasting powder, dynamite, and eventually a "fatal" head-on collision with a train in a dark tunnel. Jeff suggested the ride is a metaphor for life: you never know what's around the next corner or beyond the next wall. Tell us something about your life – good or bad – that came as a real surprise to you.
3. A couple weeks ago, we talked about what the Bible means when it says we have been created in God's image. We saw how the Hebrew word for "image" would have reminded the original readers of Genesis of the statuesque images ancient kings made of themselves and placed in remote corners of their kingdom to remind everyone of their power and presence. The idea in Genesis is that we've been put here on earth to be like one of those images for our King – to be living, breathing images of God who remind others of the power, presence, and values of God. God put us here, then stepped back, entrusting us with the power and responsibility to help create the reality in which we and others live. Some theologians call this "co-creating with God."
 - a. When you hear that phrase "co-creating with God," how do you feel about it? Is it exciting, off putting, uplifting, burdensome? What feeling words would you use and why?
 - b. Tell us about a time when you felt you were co-creating something with God.
4. Early in his career, Collins led a lab of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in a brutal hunt-and-peck search for the one "misspelled" DNA letter in 3 billion that causes cystic fibrosis. He compared it to being asked to find a single burned-out lightbulb in a basement in a house somewhere in the United States. Collins says, "The work was brutal, almost overwhelming, and many in the scientific community thought our approach would never work." But ten years and \$50 million dollars later, they found the defective letter. Collins' experience reminds us that . . .
 - ✓ Co-creating with God is hard work; it's not for the faint of heart.
 - ✓ It requires dogged persistence.

✓ But the results can be exhilarating.

- a. Which of these three lessons most speaks to you – and why?
 - b. When has God called you to do something really hard? Did you do it?
 - c. Why do you think God steps back and gives us so much freedom to shape the reality in which we live?
 - d. None of us is a world-class scientist who will discover the cure for a global disease, but God calls all of us to be “gene splicers” in our own individual situations. In other words, when we encounter broken or defective situations, we have the opportunity to be a healing force. Describe a challenging situation you’re facing right now where you are called to be a positive spiritual force.
5. Co-creating with God means we’re often called into uncomfortable or even frightening situations. Later in his career, Collins was asked to head the federal government’s massive Human Genome Project – a quest to map all 3 billion letters in the human DNA code – at a time when that project was experiencing difficulties and facing huge headwinds. Collins said no because he didn’t want to leave his comfortable position at the University of Michigan, but then felt convicted that God was laying this opportunity before him and calling him into it. So he reversed himself and said yes. Collins’ experience echoes a Gospel story. Let’s read Matthew 19:16-22, as printed on p. 3.
- a. When the young man in this story came to Jesus, what do you think he was hoping to take away from the encounter? What was his plan?
 - b. How do you think the young man felt when Jesus asked him to upend his life, liquidate his possessions, and start traveling with Jesus?
 - c. What do you imagine the young man’s life could have been like if he had accepted Jesus’ call? What do you imagine his life was like after he turned Jesus down?
 - d. Jeff said our Gospel story illustrates the tension in life between comfort and adventure. Which way do you naturally lean – toward comfort or adventure? Why do you think you lean the way you do? Where does that come from?
 - e. Because Collins took the risk of saying yes to the Human Genome project, he got to play a pivotal role in one of history’s greatest discoveries – a discovery as monumental as that of fire or the wheel. What’s the biggest risk you’ve ever taken because you felt God wanted you to? What happened?
6. Jeff said, “The only thing I know for sure about God’s will for your life and mine is that it’s not going to be what we think it is. There are surprises around each corner. We find God’s will by embracing the opportunities life thrusts our direction and

making the most of them. It's a wild ride; let's embrace it." Let's talk about that statement. How does it make you feel? Do you agree or disagree? If it's true, what does it mean for your life and faith journey?

Matthew 19:16-22

16 Then someone came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷And Jesus said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

¹⁸ The young man said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰ The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?"

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.