



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Faith & SCIENCE
YOUTH IN DIALOGUE

Session One
Faith & Science Dialogue:
Can it Happen?

Faith &

FAITH & SCIENCE DIALOGUE: CAN IT HAPPEN? REV. DANA HENDERSHOT

Why are we here today? What do we really mean by dialogue between science and faith or between science and religion? Why it is important for us to discuss?

This session is designed for an hour and forty-five minutes.

GOALS FOR THE SESSION

- To understand the importance of both science and faith.
- To gain a basic understanding of the similarities and differences between science and faith.
- To learn ways that science and faith relate to one another.
- To begin to understand how one can personally relate faith and scientific knowledge together.
- To open discussion on how faith may be affected by science.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Chairs

Paper

Pencils

Bucket

TV & DVD player

The movie *Cosmic Voyage*

Copies of the quotes provided

Copies of the four “Session One” handouts

Copies of the four “Session One” illustrations

Printable copies of all documents are in the back of the book or online.

Note: *Cosmic Voyage* is now available on YouTube. It can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxXf7AJZ73A>

SET-UP

Arrange circles of chairs in each of the four corners of your space. At each corner, provide the handouts and illustrations for a different one of Barbour’s four ways to relate religion and science. Also, place the quotes around the room so the participants are able to read them.

IDENTIFYING THE QUESTIONS

Hand out the pencils and paper. Ask each participant to write down a question they have about science and faith. Why did they come to this conference? What were they hoping to experience or discuss? Collect the papers in the bucket and set it aside.

BEGINNING THE DIALOGUE

Start the session by watching *Cosmic Voyage*. Afterward, have participants form four small groups – one in each corner – and discuss the following questions:

- Describe something new you learned or thought about as a result of the video.
- Does the video relate to your understanding of God? How?
- As humans, we are part of a universe much larger than we are, and it is made up of things much smaller than we are. Do you have any new ideas about God’s presence in the universe?
- How have you experienced this?

WAYS RELIGION AND SCIENCE RELATE

Have the groups read through the descriptions of their model and discuss the questions. After seven to ten minutes, send groups to the next corner, and continue until everyone has discussed each description.

After these discussions, bring the whole group together again. Have each participant walk to the corner that best represents the way he or she feels science and faith relate. Let them know that each person is able to choose more than one of the models presented if he or she finds their views are represented with more than one model. Help them to understand that none of the models is the only way to consider faith and science, and people who see things differently need to be respectful of one another to continue constructive interaction. However, for the sake of discussion, have each participant pick only one category.

Discuss how the formation turns out, and see if anyone is surprised by where most of the people are gathered.

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUOTATIONS

A few thought-provoking quotations are listed below. The printable versions should be placed around the room. Read through them together with the group, and ask participants to pick a quote that they find striking. Then ask them to split into groups with the others who chose the same quote. Give time for each group to discuss the following questions.

- Why do you think this statement might have been made?
- Why did you pick this quote?
- What does this quote have to do with religion and science dialogue?
- How do you think the author of this quote saw the science and faith relationship?
- What do you agree with or disagree with in this quote?

“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”

Albert Einstein, German-born U.S. physicist, 1879-1955, from *Science, Philosophy, and Religion: A Symposium*, 1941.

“Science may set limits to knowledge, but should not set limits to imagination.”

Bertrand Russell, British author, mathematician, and philosopher, 1872-1970

“Science is facts; just as houses are made of stones, so is science made of facts; but a pile of stones is not a house and a collection of facts is not necessarily science.”

Henri Poincare, French mathematician and physicist, 1842-1912

“For in much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase sorrow.”

Ecclesiastes 1:18

“Science investigates, religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man wisdom, which is control.”

Martin Luther King Jr., American civil rights leader, 1929-1968

“Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.”

Pope John Paul II, 1920-2005, from *Message to George Coyne S.J., Director of the Vatican Observatory*, 1988.

ADDRESSING NEW QUESTIONS

Ask the group whether they have any new questions regarding faith and science. If they do, then explain that they have learned something new, because new knowledge always brings out additional questions. If you feel comfortable answering any of these questions, do so, or ask if anyone else in the group has an answer. Unfortunately, the answer to many of their questions may not be known yet or is too complicated to provide here. But discussion will open the door to further understanding. If no one feels confident giving an answer, say that you don't know the answer. If you are able, suggest places that the answer might be found. Use the remaining time to go through the questions they wrote at the beginning of the session. See if some of the questions have been addressed or changed.

CLOSING

Split the participants into two groups, roughly equal in size. Gather the group members together.

Ask the individuals of one group to summarize something important that they learned during this session and how that might relate to the good news that God's love was revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Let them know that these insights will be shared during the homily at the worship service at the end of the day. Have them appoint someone to write down and present these conclusions during the homily.

Then ask the other group to discuss whether the discussion inspired hope for their lives. If so, they should write a prayer of hope. If not, they should write a prayer requesting hope. Have them appoint someone to read it during the Prayers of the People during the worship service at the end of the day.

Explain that they will remain in these two groups for the rest of the day. The group that wrote the summary will go to "Are There Others?" first. The group that wrote the prayer will attend "Brain Connections!" first.