

## Week 2 (Jan 19 + 21)

# “Faith, Reason, & Evidence”

One of the myths in modern culture has been that science, much like an old detective show, is only interested in “just the facts.” That’s been changing more and more in recent years, as people are more willing to challenge experts—for better or worse. But the underlying ideal is still there: knowing the truth is about gathering facts, following the evidence wherever it leads. The best positions are the ones where you make no assumptions, question everything, and see what’s left standing.

Secularism sees itself this way. It’s just following the science. It’s just being smart, not accepting things at face value. Faith is for someone else, they say. We have reason.

There’s a big problem with this. There’s no such thing as a perfectly objective person, one who brings no values or assumptions to their thinking. We can’t have a God’s-eye view of anything. We’re creatures. If you set out to doubt everything consistently, you will find nothing left. You always have to assume things like “my experience isn’t an illusion” or “contradicting statements cannot both be true at the same time and in the same way.”

**All knowledge starts with assumptions, with trust, with something like faith.** Science starts with assumptions. Secularism starts with assumptions. We do, too. And don’t worry—that’s not a bad thing. That’s how God designed us. You don’t have to fear that it’s all or nothing, that if I can’t be completely neutral, I can’t have the truth. We just need to bring the right assumptions, the right interpretations.

The question is, how do you know you’re bringing the right assumptions? How can you tell whether Christian faith is better or worse than a secular “faith”? Here are three ways:

1. How well do my beliefs explain what I see in the world?
2. How consistent are my beliefs with one another?
3. Does my gut tell me something is off?

## **Week 2 (Jan 19 + 21) - Faith, Reason, & Evidence (cont.)**

Secularism typically comes in one of two flavors: modern or postmodern. Both of these fail as theories of knowledge. If you begin with modernism and seek a view from nowhere based on only evidence and proof, you'll end up with nothing. If you begin with postmodernism and give up trying to make sure your thoughts and feelings correspond with the real world, you end up stuck, too. Neither approach is internally consistent. They fail test #2.

And if thinking about how we know seems too abstract, think about morality and ethics. Neither modernism nor postmodernism can support the moral claims they make. They want to adopt Christian values without Christian foundations. (We'll talk more about this in weeks to come.)

Christianity offers an internally-consistent view of who we are, how we know, and how we should live. As we approach this study, let's be careful to attend to what God has said and check and refine any assumptions we may be bringing with us.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

Do you tend to think of religion in general and Christianity in particular as based on reason and evidence? Why or why not?

What would you say to someone who says they don't need religion because they just follow the science?

What do you think of the idea that we can't be objective? Is that unsettling?

## **Week 2 (Jan 19 + 21) - Faith, Reason, & Evidence (cont.)**

Do you find Christianity to be internally consistent? Why or why not?

What would you say to someone who says the Bible is full of contradictions?

How do you personally think about the relationship between faith and science?

### **NOTES FROM PERSONAL REFLECTION + GROUP DISCUSSION**