

Leader's Guide

Episode 16

Good News Academically Speaking

Summary

The academic environment can sometimes be a hostile place for people of faith. A big part of the problem results from those who have a truncated view of the nature of truth, thinking it can only arise from empirical reasoning. In this episode, Dr. Jonathan Tsai speaks about what we can know empirically and what we can only know by faith. This distinction is not a problem for the Christian, who recognizes that all truth comes from God. Ultimately, empirically-based truth and rationality are tools to be used for the glory of God, not excuses to deny His existence or supremacy.

Speaker



Dr. Jonathan Tsai is an ophthalmologist specializing in oculoplastic surgery on faculty at the Baylor Scott and White Eye Institute and Texas A&M College of Medicine, where he teaches medical students and trains residents in ophthalmology and plastic surgery. He is a lifetime member of CMDA and first became involved 26 years ago as a medical student in South Carolina. He and his family enjoy hosting medical students in their home for Bible studies and serving on medical mission teams delivering eye care in Peru. He and his wife Mandolyn have been entrusted with five sons and six daughters ranging in age from age 17 years to three months. For further information or to contact Dr. Jonathan Tsai, please email him at jhtsai@mac.com.

Discussion Questions

1. **What from this video inspired, edified or challenged you?**
2. **What motivates you to share your faith?**

There is certainly no one “right” answer, but serious contemplation of all that Christ does for us is what creates the overflow that empowers us to live out and speak of God’s grace to us. We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19), and we want others to know His inspiring and empowering love, as well.

3. **Dr. Tsai mentions that his “faith informs what I do, not detracts from it.” How do you see your faith “informing” your practice? Be specific.**

Our faith informs our practice in numerous ways—including, most importantly, our call to excellence in the treatment we provide, our loving attitudes with patients, careful listening skills and empathy, and being open, honest and transparent with our patients. We need to evaluate all we do in our practice through the “grid” of God’s Word.

4. **Dr. Tsai speaks of God revealing truth in two ways, through General Revelation (all that God has created) and through Special Revelation (God’s Word, the Bible). What are similarities and differences between the two? Explain the following quote from this episode in light of these two sources of truth: “You can still use reason to support your faith, but just don’t let reason supplant your faith.”**

Both General Revelation and Special Revelation are legitimate sources for us to discover God-given truth. Also, both must be handled carefully, or we can derive inappropriate conclusions from each of them. However, one critical distinction is that the truth God communicates through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments goes well beyond what we could ever learn empirically. Areas to which Special Revelation uniquely speaks include the origin of man, the nature of man, morality, the ultimate purpose of man, eternal justice and the eternal destination of man. Those who limit their understanding of truth to mere empirical derivation will never be able to satisfactorily answer the deepest questions of the human heart.

5. **How would you answer a friend who asks, “Is Jesus the only way to God?”**

One approach would be to begin with a question: “What is it that blocks our way to God?” The answer, which even a non-Christian should be able to appreciate to some extent, is the fact that God is perfectly holy and we are not. The next logical question is, “Can we attain a level of holiness acceptable to God?” If the answer is yes, then there are many religions that seek to lay out a way to accomplish this. However, Jesus is unique in religious circles in that He called people to look to Him in faith as their way to the Father (Isaiah 53, Matthew 10:32, John 5:39, John 11:25, John 14:1, John 14:6) So ultimately, the person who denies the necessity of Jesus for salvation is at odds with Jesus, even more so than with the believer who is sharing the gospel.

A common response from non-Christians is feigned or real concern for the person who has never heard of Jesus. A number of promises in the Scriptures promise that the person who truly seeks the Lord will find Him, such as Jeremiah 29:13. For the person who is truly seeking the Lord, God will find a way to reach them—perhaps through a missionary, perhaps through a dream or a vision or perhaps through whatever means the Lord chooses. At this point we can challenge the person with whom we are speaking: “Are you seeking the Lord with all your heart?”

6. **How might transparency with colleagues and co-workers bring glory to God? How does Acts 24:16 apply to transparency in your workplace?**

Acts 24:16 says, “...I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before other people, always” (NASB). Keeping a clear conscience, as

Paul suggests, might entail careful informed consent, eliminating hidden motives (profitability) and careful explanations of care plans. It will also inevitably require, on certain occasions, to ask forgiveness for inappropriate actions—something we are hesitant to do, but an action which is so counter-cultural that it could actually be a strong testimony to the power of the gospel.

7. Do you see your calling as a healthcare professional and as an ambassador for Christ as a duty or a delight?

Every person who walks with Christ should be well familiar with both the duty and the delight of being His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). And despite the tremendous persecution that has fallen on so many followers of Jesus, one of the clearest statements of Jesus regarding His ultimate purpose is found in John 15:11: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (ESV). Perhaps we create a false dichotomy when we assume that duty cannot be a delight, as illustrated in Hebrews 12:2: “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross...” (NIV).

8. Who has had the greatest impact on your faith through the years and, retrospectively, how intentional were they in investing in you (though it might not have been as apparent at the time)? Where is God calling you to sacrificially invest in others in the same way?

It is hoped this question will inspire people to be intentional in their efforts to sow into the lives of other believers (2 Timothy 2:2).

9. Dr. Pascal Magne describes his search for Christ as involving the consideration of several different religious perspectives before he adopted the Christian faith as his own. What might you say to someone who claimed that all religions are equally valid ways to reach God?

The various religious options of the world are not in agreement, so they cannot all be equally valid. This is equivalent to saying, “Any prescription will do for my sickness.” One must first determine the correct diagnosis, then the best treatment can be pursued. If the speaker is trying to make a statement against any form of absolute pronouncement, then they could be reminded of the fact that they are indeed making an absolute pronouncement which several of the world’s religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) would find highly offensive. Ultimately, there is no way to avoid taking a stand, so serious seekers should take a stand with that perspective which best explains the world in which we live, and which enables us to best deal with the challenges we face.

10. What is one take-home item from today’s session that you hope to implement?

Additional Resources

1. Discipleship Essentials
2. Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time
by Greg Ogden

3. Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Plan for the World Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything
4. Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical
5. The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism
by Timothy J. Keller
6. Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers
by Dane Ortlund