



WHAT  
WOULD  
**YOU**  
SAY

***Your Guide for Talking about the  
Hard Issues in 2020***

## WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

You're in a conversation about abortion and someone says, "Human life doesn't begin at conception. It's just a clump of cells." **What would you say?**

It's easy to say life doesn't begin at conception because an embryo doesn't look like what we think people should look like. But we know human life begins at some point. Here are a few things to remember while you think about when that is.



### 1. LIFE DOESN'T BEGIN AT BIRTH.

It isn't logical to say life begins at birth because that would suggest that the baby inside the womb one day prior to birth wasn't alive. It's not reasonable to say an individual who is alive at birth is not alive one day prior to birth. The only difference is where they are. So, we know life does not begin at birth.

### 2. LIFE DOESN'T BEGIN AT VIABILITY.

Many argue that human life begins once a baby can survive, on her own, outside the womb. But there are problems with this argument too. After all, viability changes based on technology. Today, babies can be born at 24 weeks and survive, but 200 years ago that wasn't possible. Viability is also determined based on where you are born. Wealthy nations make things possible for babies that wouldn't be possible in a poorer country. Does that mean a 24-week baby in the United States is more "alive" than a 24-week baby in the jungles of the Congo? Of course not. So, life must be determined by something other than viability.



### 3. LIFE DOES NOT BEGIN WITH THE HEARTBEAT.

We know that living things only come from other living things. It wouldn't be possible, then, for the embryo to be non-living for the first few weeks and suddenly spring into life. So the embryo has to be alive prior to the heartbeat. Does this mean that we can be alive without a heartbeat? Yes! That's actually what makes the newly-conceived embryo more

functionally impressive than a born person. The embryo has an ability to live, grow, and move through the stages of human development without the feature you and I need to continue our growth and development.

If life doesn't begin at birth, viability, or heartbeat, when does it begin?



#### **4. LIFE BEGINS AT CONCEPTION, FERTILIZATION.**

At fertilization, a living mother and father give life to a whole, living organism, genetically distinct from his or her mother and father. No, the embryo doesn't look like everyone else, but aren't we passed the idea that someone has to look a certain way before they are considered human? Think of it like a polaroid picture: initially all you will see are black smudge marks. The moment the photo is taken, however, the image is captured—it just needs time to develop. The same is true for you and me: the moment of sperm-egg fusion we, in our uniqueness from our parents, began to exist—we just needed time to develop.

#### **LET'S REVIEW:**

1. Life doesn't begin at birth, because that suggests you aren't alive the day before birth.
2. Life doesn't begin at viability, because viability depends on where you were born and when.
3. Life doesn't begin at the heartbeat either, because that requires you to believe the heartbeat emerged from someone that isn't alive.
4. So, we're left with one option. Life begins at conception, at fertilization. It's what science tells us and logic requires us to acknowledge.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do people make the argument that life doesn't begin at conception?
2. Do you find it difficult to accept that an embryo is simply a very young person?
3. Is there anything about this that challenges the way you previously thought about abortion? Does this change the way you think about when life begins?
4. Do you find it difficult to believe that an embryo just after conception is just as human as you or I? If so, why?

#### **FURTHER RESOURCES:**

[www.prolifetraining.com](http://www.prolifetraining.com)  
The Case for Life by Scott Klusendorf

## CRITICAL THEORY IS BIBLICAL

You're in a conversation and someone says, "Since God cares about the oppressed, Christians should embrace Critical Theory, because it's trying to eliminate oppression too."

### **What would you say?**

Critical Theory is one way our culture attempts to explain and confront power structures. Some Christians have embraced it as well. But what is it? To understand Critical Theory, we need to understand its two primary claims.

First, everyone can be divided into two groups: those who have power and those who don't. Second, those who have power always oppress those who don't.

But how do we know who the oppressed and who the oppressors are? According to Critical Theory, the categories of oppressor and oppressed are based on your group identity. Things like race, gender, religion, immigration status, income, sexual orientation, and gender identity determine whether we are oppressed or one of the oppressors. Of course, someone might be part of an oppressed group in one way but one of the oppressors in another way. That's where the concept of Intersectionality comes in.

Intersectionality seeks to measure someone's level of oppression based on how many of these groups they identify with. For example, a black man is less oppressed than a black woman, who is less oppressed than a black lesbian. In Critical Theory, the degree to which you are oppressed determines your level of moral authority. The more categories of oppression someone identifies with, the more moral authority they have.

As a result, the experience and perspective of a gay, black woman is more valuable than the experience and perspective of a straight, white man, regardless of what they have to say. In the same way, the more oppressed someone is, the less moral responsibility they have for their actions. Those who aren't part of oppressed groups—straight, white men—gain moral authority by surrendering to those who have it—the oppressed. This is called being "woke." Some people claim that since Jesus cares about oppression, Critical Theory and Intersectionality should be embraced by Christians. But Critical Theory and Intersectionality are not consistent with Christianity, and here are three reasons why:



## **1. CRITICAL THEORY OFFERS A DIFFERENT VIEW OF HUMANITY THAN CHRISTIANITY.**

Critical Theory claims that our identity as human beings is rooted in things like race and gender, features that differ from person to person. But the Bible grounds our identity as human beings, and the value every human has, in the fact that we are created in God's own image. This is something every human being shares. While Critical Theory pits some groups of people against other groups based on their status as oppressors or oppressed, the Bible says we are all equal before God: created equal, equally valuable, equally guilty of sin, equally deserving of punishment, and equally able to find grace and mercy in Jesus. Which leads to the second point.

## **2. CRITICAL THEORY OFFERS A DIFFERENT VIEW OF SIN THAN CHRISTIANITY.**

The Bible identifies sin as anything that violates God's design for people, including unjust oppression of other people, but Critical Theory identifies sin only as oppression. As a result, advocates of Critical Theory would see biblical practices such as discipleship, correction, leadership, and reproof as sinful assertions of power if the speaker is among the oppressors, and would excuse sins like jealousy, anger, hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness, or envy among the oppressed. The Bible says that we are all guilty before God, regardless of social status, race, or economic situation. The Bible condemns oppression as one of, but certainly not the only, way in which humans rebel against God. Because Critical Theory gets the human problem wrong, it also gets the solution wrong, which leads to the third point.

### 3. CRITICAL THEORY OFFERS A DIFFERENT VIEW OF SALVATION THAN CHRISTIANITY.

According to the Bible, because we are all equally guilty of sin, salvation can only be found in Jesus through repentance. Our hope is found in being forgiven of sin. Because Critical Theory teaches that oppressors are guilty and the oppressed are not, salvation for the oppressed is found, not through repentance, but in social liberation here and now. Their hope is only through activism. In other words, Critical Theory has a completely different understanding of who we are, what the problem is, and how to fix it, than Christianity.



#### LET'S REVIEW:

1. Critical Theory offers a different view of humanity. Our identity is in our status as image bearers and children of God, not in our race, gender, income, or immigrant status.
2. Critical Theory offers a different view of sin. Oppression is wrong, but it is a symptom, not the disease.
3. Critical Theory offers a different view of salvation. We cannot solve our biggest problem, Jesus can. Our hope is not in our circumstances on earth, but destiny in eternity.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Critical Theory is attractive to many people?
2. What are some of the problems that Critical Theory seeks to address?
3. Do you think Critical Theory can help in some situations? If so, how?
4. How would you respond to someone who cares more about the groups you identify with rather than the content of what you have to say? Have you ever paid more attention to someone's race, gender, or class than the content of their opinion or argument?
5. Have you seen examples of Critical Theory in recent news or movements?

#### FURTHER RESOURCES:

"What Do We Do with Critical Theory" Breakpoint Commentary, available at: <https://www.breakpoint.org/what-do-we-do-with-critical-theory-racism-white-privilege-and-christianity/>

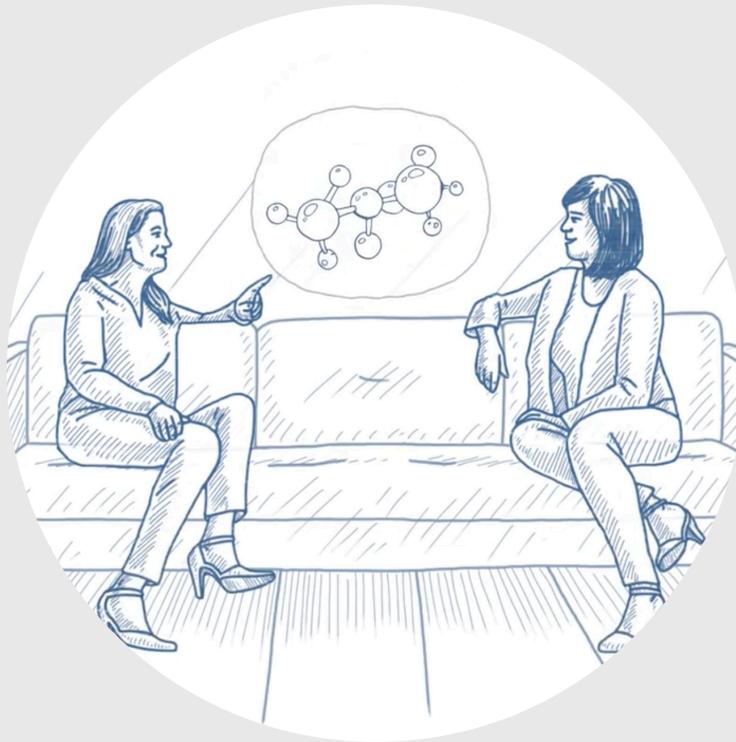


## DO YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION?

You're talking about faith with someone and they tell you they don't believe in God because they believe in science. And, they say that you have to choose.

### ***What would you say?***

There are those who believe that science and religion are in conflict and that someone must choose whether they want to believe in science or believe in religion. If you ever hear this argument, here are four things to remember.



### **1. MODERN SCIENCE WAS STARTED BY CHRISTIANS.**

Many of the founders of modern science were Christians. Men like Galileo, Kepler, Pascal, Boyle, Newton, Faraday, and Clerk-Maxwell were all firm believers in God. They weren't scientists despite being Christians. It was their faith that moved them to want to discover more about the natural world they lived in. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "Men became scientists because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a legislator." Far from hindering modern science, faith in God was one of the motors that drove it.

## 2. MANY OF THE BEST SCIENTISTS TODAY ARE PEOPLE OF FAITH.

Between 1901 and 2000, over 60% of Nobel Laureates were Christians. If our best scientists are people with deep, sincere religious faith, there may be a misunderstanding by some about what religious faith is, but there cannot be an essential conflict between being a scientist and faith in God.



## 3. SCIENCE EXPLAINS "HOW." RELIGION EXPLAINS "WHY."

One reason that science and faith are not in conflict is that they are complementary. Imagine there is a boiling pot of water and someone asks, "why is this water boiling?" You could say, "because heat energy from the gas flame is being conducted through the copper base of the kettle and is agitating the molecules of the water to such an extent that the water is boiling." This is a true statement. But, you could also answer by saying, "because I wanted a cup of tea." Though very different, this is also a true statement. One answer explains "how" the water boils, while the other answer explains what caused the conditions that made it boil. So it is with science and religion. They are not in conflict, they are complementary as we seek to understand both "how" and "why."



#### **4. SCIENCE CAN'T EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.**

Science describes the laws the nature, but it can't explain where matter came from. It can't explain how life began. It can't explain the purpose of our lives, what it means to love, or why we desire to do things we know we shouldn't do. It's not only possible to be curious about those big questions as well as scientific questions, but it's strange not to.

## **LET'S REVIEW:**

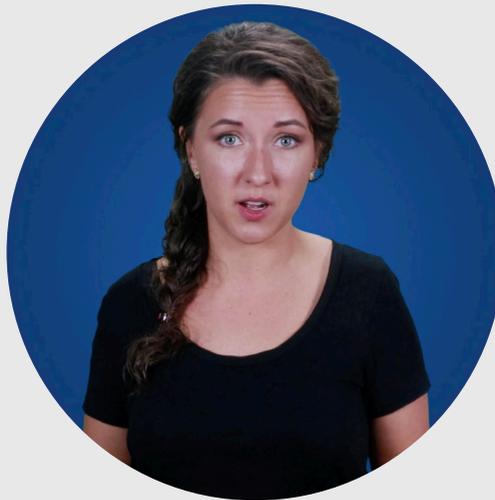
1. Modern science was started by Christians. You don't start fields of study you don't believe in.
2. Many of the best scientists today are people of faith. 60% of Nobel Laureates in the 20th century were Christians.
3. Science considers "how." Religion considers "why." They aren't in conflict, they are complementary.
4. Science doesn't explain everything. It's not only okay to think about things beyond the realm of science, it's healthy.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do you think that, in some places, faith and science are seen to be in conflict?
2. Do you see an essential conflict between science and religion?
3. Is there a way for Christians to change the impression that faith and science are in conflict?
4. Why does it matter that science can't explain everything?

## **FURTHER RESOURCES:**

Can Science Explain Everything? by John Lennox



## CHRISTIANS SHOULD AVOID POLITICS AND FOCUS ON EVANGELISM

You're in a conversation and someone says, "Government can't change the human heart. So, Christians should avoid politics and focus on evangelism."

### ***What would you say?***

It's true that the goal of the Gospel is to change people's hearts, not just their behavior. It's also true that government is not the most effective way to reach someone's heart. Does this mean that God wants us to stay away from what happens in government and focus only on evangelism? No. And here are three reasons why:

### **1. GOD CREATED GOVERNMENT.**

Most Christians accept that God created the family, and God created the Church. The Bible is pretty clear about that. But it also teaches something we often forget: God created government as well. In Romans 13, the Apostle Paul clearly says that God created government to reward good and punish evil. Christians might be tempted to believe that government is less important because it cannot change hearts, but that's not what it was created to do. The Church was created for that. The family, Church, and government were all created by God for distinct purposes. There are limits to what each one can accomplish individually. However, those limitations don't justify neglecting any one of them. Human flourishing is most possible when all three of these institutions function as God intended. This means that all of them are important and all of them deserve our attention. Which leads us to the second point.



### **2. CIVIC STEWARDSHIP DOES NOT REQUIRE NEGLECT OF THE GOSPEL.**

Is it more important for you to be a good spouse or a good parent? Is it more important to be kind or to be honest? The answer, of course, is that both are important. Being a good spouse makes you a better parent and being honest is part of being kind. In the same way, the choice between evangelism and civic stewardship is not a choice Jesus offered. We are to be salt and light in our communities and we are to make disciples of all nations. That's the job description. God did not create a one-dimensional world, so we do not have the luxury of living one-dimensional lives. A Christian Worldview requires us to see the whole creation the way God does and act accordingly. Does that mean we should place our hope in what happens politically? We'll address that in our third point.



### 3. APATHY IS NOT THE SOLUTION TO IDOLATRY.

A common criticism of civic engagement is that people place their hope in politics when it should be in Jesus. Does that mean we should avoid politics to make sure it doesn't become an idol? No. After all, anything can become an idol: a career, a hobby, a sports team, a charity, even church. A spouse or our children can even become our idols if we ultimately look to them for comfort, joy, and meaning. And yes, if we place our ultimate hope in the government or the next election, or a political leader, it is idolatry. But, the proper response to idolatry isn't apathy, it's keeping our eyes on eternity, placing our hope in God, and seeing the world the way Jesus does. We'd never tell someone to neglect their children to avoid the risk of becoming a helicopter parent. In the same way, we shouldn't avoid civic engagement because some people care too much about politics. The correct response to imbalance is not neglect, it's balance.



#### LET'S REVIEW:

1. God created government. If God made it, it's our job to see that it fulfills the purpose He created for it.
2. Civic stewardship does not require neglect of the Gospel. Christians can walk and chew gum.
3. Apathy is not the solution to idolatry. Yes, it's possible to care too much about politics, but the solution to any imbalance is not apathy, but keeping things in balance.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think it's common to hear people say that Christians should avoid political issues and focus on evangelism?
2. What attitude should Christians have toward politics and government?
3. Why do you think some Christians shy away from talking about politics?
4. What might it look like to "keep things in balance"?

#### FURTHER RESOURCES:

How Now Shall We Live? by Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey

## TRANSGENDERISM DEPENDS ON STEREOTYPES

You're in a conversation about sex and someone says that accepting transgender theory is necessary for our society to tear down harmful stereotypes about men and women. What would you say?



Far from destroying sex stereotypes, transgender theory depends on rigid stereotypes about what it means to be a man or a woman. Parents are told that stereotypes like clothing preferences, hair styles, preferred toys, and games are signs their children are transgender.

Take this mom who described in an article in Parent Magazine how she learned her daughter was actually a boy: "The signs could be seen in all the phases and interests that came and went -- Spider-Man, Power Rangers, Mario, zombies, Beyblades, Minecraft, WWE, Pokémon.... In isolation, each sign was minuscule and meaningless, easily explained away as normal, as no big deal. As a collection, however, they added up to an unwavering truth: He was not growing out of being a boy. He was growing into it." This mother came to the conclusion that her daughter is actually a boy, at least in part, because she consistently enjoyed "boy stuff."

So, we have this strange situation where, if we tell a girl that liking dresses makes her a girl, it's sexist. But if we tell a boy that liking dresses makes him a girl, it's affirming. That's not all. When someone transitions from one gender to the other, they typically do so by expressing sex-stereotypes. For example, when Bruce Jenner decided to become Caitlyn, he showed up on the cover of Vanity Fair with long hair, lots of makeup, and even a little bit of cleavage. All to show how female he is.

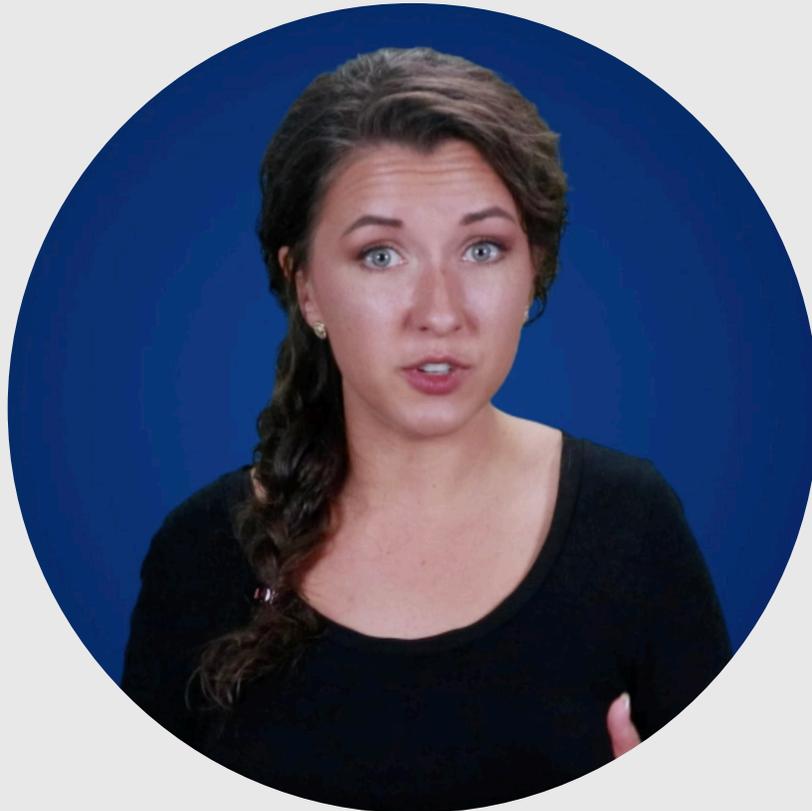
We should all agree that certain gender stereotypes are arbitrary and even harmful. But transgender theory doesn't eliminate these stereotypes. It isn't helping us evolve past them as a society. Transgender theory depends on these stereotypes.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do some parents help their children identify as the opposite sex while others don't?
2. How do you think a parent should respond if their child enjoys games or toys that may be associated with the opposite sex?
3. Do you think it is possible to be born into the "wrong" body?
4. Do you agree that transgenderism depends on stereotypes?

### **FURTHER RESOURCES:**

When Harry Became Sally by Ryan T. Anderson





[colsoncenter.org](http://colsoncenter.org)

[whatwouldyousay.org](http://whatwouldyousay.org)