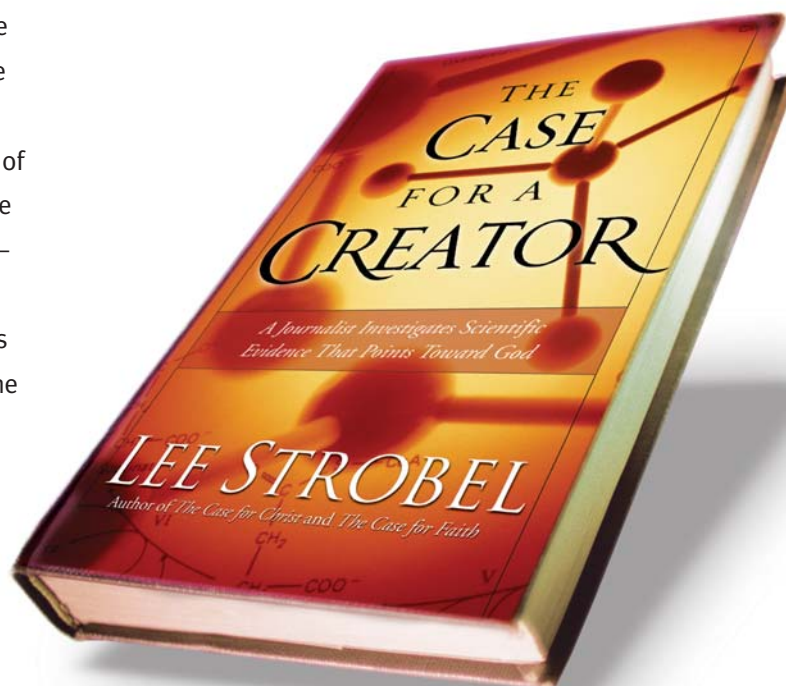


THE CASE FOR A CREATOR

“With an open mind, I began asking: Does the latest scientific evidence tend to point toward or away from the existence of God... Be prepared to be amazed—even *dazzled*—by the startling new narrative that science has been busy writing over the past few decades.”

—Lee Strobel in *The Case for a Creator*, Chapter 2



Discussion Guide: Questions for Reflection or Group Study

Discussing a book like *The Case for a Creator* in a small group is a great way for everyone to get a deeper understanding of the issues. As your group grapples with a question each member often defines it in their own terms, and everyone learns together. Use this guide to stimulate and guide discussions in your community group, church study group, school, and more.

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Chapter One:

White-Coated Scientists versus Black-Robed Preachers

1. Have you ever met someone who was as hostile toward Christianity as the author was?
What are the various factors that might have been driving that person's skepticism?
Is there any part of the author's attitude that you can personally relate to? How so?
2. What's your current viewpoint concerning Christianity? How would you rank its credibility on a scale of one to ten, with one being "none" and ten being "absolute"? Specifically, what are your opinions based on? Have your attitudes changed over the years? If so, how? What prompted those changes?
3. Do you believe that Christianity is being eclipsed or enhanced by modern science? Why? On what do you base your assessment?
4. William Provine, professor of history and biological sciences at Cornell University, listed five implications if Darwinism is true: there's no evidence for God; there's no life after death; there's no absolute foundation for right and wrong; there's no ultimate meaning for life; and people don't really have free will. Why do you think he's right or wrong? Which one of these implications concerns you the most and why?

Chapter Two:

The Images of Evolution

1. Can you recall when you first were exposed to Darwin's theory of evolution? What was the setting? What was your reaction at the time? Have your attitudes toward Darwinism changed since then? Why or why not? To what degree do you consider yourself to be open-minded on the issue?
2. Were any of the "images of evolution" described in the chapter instrumental in shaping your opinions? How so?
3. The author said that his belief in Darwinism was pivotal in his decision to become an atheist. In what way has your opinion about evolution affected your spiritual outlook?
4. How do you respond to Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin's opinion that science should be seen as "the only begetter of truth"? Is that a scientific or a philosophical statement? How much confidence do you put in science? What do you believe are the limits of science? What ways are there to know about something apart from the scientific method?
5. What preconceptions or prejudices might inhibit your investigation of the scientific evidence for a Creator? What can you do to set them aside and keep an open mind? What do you hope this investigation of the case for a Creator will personally accomplish for you?

Chapter Three:

Doubts about Darwinism

1. On a scale of one to ten, with one representing “total disbelief” and ten representing “complete agreement,” what was your personal opinion about Darwinism before you read the interview with Jonathan Wells? Why did you choose that number? Did the number change after reading Wells’s critique of evolutionary theory? How so?
2. Which one of biologist Jonathan Wells’s disclosures was the most surprising to you? Why?
3. Consider each of the various icons of evolution that Wells discussed. As you evaluate each one, discuss whether you now think it provides viable support for Darwinism. What makes you reach that conclusion? If you were a juror and the icons were presented to you as evidence for the truth of Darwinism, would you say you have a reasonable doubt? Why or why not?
4. In Wells’s opinion, the evidence for Darwinism “is not only grossly inadequate, it’s systematically distorted,” and that in twenty or thirty years “people will look back in amazement and say, ‘How could anyone have believed this?’” In your opinion, what would need to happen before most people would reach that conclusion? How likely do you believe it is that this will occur?

Chapter Four:

Where Science Meets Faith

1. Re-read the quotations that begin this chapter. They represent radically different viewpoints. Which position more accurately reflects your current position? What influences or factors prompted you to arrive at this perspective?
2. What was your first reaction to Stephen Jay Gould’s so-called NOMA principle, which says science and faith occupy distinct realms that shouldn’t overlap? Was your opinion buttressed or changed by Stephen Meyer’s analysis?
3. Meyer lists six ways in which modern science supports belief in God. Which one of these areas is most intriguing to you? Which, if any, engendered the most skepticism? If Meyer is correct concerning these six categories of evidence, how strong is the case for a Creator? How well do you believe Meyer responded to the objections to intelligent design theory? Which of his answers were the most convincing and why?
4. Every scientist has a motive, Meyer said, “but motives are irrelevant to assessing the validity of scientific theories.” Why do you agree or disagree with him?
5. Meyer said that he once resonated with Nietzsche’s question: *Why should God rule and I serve?* “Why should a condition of my happiness be submission to the will of God?” Meyer asked. “I sensed I couldn’t be happy without him; I knew my bad lifestyle only brought misery. So I ended up literally shaking my fist at God in a wheat field in Washington State.” Have you ever figuratively shaken your fist at God? What circumstances prompted that reaction? What has happened since then to resolved this issue? How might your current view of God—positive or negative—affect the way you assess the scientific evidence for his existence?

Chapter Five:

The Evidence of Cosmology

1. How convincing is the first premise of the *kalam* cosmological argument—that whatever begins to exist has a cause? Can you think of any exceptions to that rule? How well do you believe William Lane Craig responded to the possibility that the universe might have emerged, uncaused, from a sea of quantum energy?
2. The second premise of the *kalam* argument says that the universe began to exist. Do you think the evidence from mathematics and cosmology sufficiently supports the claim that the universe had a beginning at some point in the past? Why or why not? How do you assess the strength of the arguments that seek to avoid the beginning of the universe?
3. The *kalam* argument says that if its two premises are true, then it's logical to conclude that the universe has a cause. Can you think of any alternate theory that would support another conclusion?
4. Craig explains several characteristics of the cause of the universe that can be deduced from the evidence: “A cause of space and time must be an uncaused, beginningless, timeless, spaceless, immaterial, personal being endowed with freedom of will and enormous power.” How well do you believe Craig has argued for this list of qualities?

Chapter Six:

The Evidence of Physics

1. Robin Collins said the evidence for the fine-tuning of the universe is widely regarded as “by far the most persuasive current argument for the existence of God.” How do you personally assess the evidence? What facts were the most important in reaching your conclusion?
2. Do you think that the finely balanced parameters of physics could be the result of random happenstance? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that ours is the only universe in existence, or that other universes also exist? What specific evidence prompts your belief? How do you assess Collins’s position that even if multiple universes exist, there must be an intelligently designed mechanism for creating them?
4. According to an article in the *New York Times*, some physicists “feel it is their mission to find a mathematical explanation of nature that leaves nothing to chance or the whim of the Creator.” Collins disagreed, saying, “We shouldn’t shrink back from the God hypothesis if that’s what the facts fit.” Which position best reflects your attitude? What prompts you to hold the opinion that you do?
5. Atheist Patrick Glynn cites the evidence from physics as being one of the reasons why he came to believe in God. How persuasive must the evidence be in order for you to come to the conclusion that a Creator exists? How close does the evidence presented in the first two chapters—cosmology and physics—come to meeting that test?

Chapter Seven:

The Evidence of Astronomy

1. What were you taught in school concerning the Earth—that it's most likely unique or that it's only one of countless other inhabited planets? Did the interview with Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Wesley Richards change your perspective? How so?
2. What fact about the universe, our galaxy, the solar system, the sun, or the Earth intrigued you the most? Why?
3. Gonzalez and Richards said there are essentially three options concerning the existence of life. One is that some natural necessity, like the laws of physics, inexorably leads to life. A second is pure chance: life is a fluke. The third is that life was intentionally created. When you compile all of the evidence presented by Gonzalez and Richards, where does the preponderance of the evidence point? What facts back up your conclusion?
4. The late John A. O'Keefe, a prominent pioneer in space research, said the evidence of astronomy led him to conclude that “the universe was created for man to live in.” Assume for a moment that he's right. What are three or four reasons why God might have been motivated to create the Earth and then populate it with creatures of his design, including humankind? What relevance do those reasons have for you personally?

Chapter Eight:

The Evidence of Biochemistry

1. Early in this chapter, a scientist is quoted as describing a single-cell organism as a high-tech factory. After reading how organisms operate on a microscopic level, do you believe that “design” or some other explanation is most appropriate? What factors helped you reach your conclusion?
2. If someone asked you to summarize Michael Behe’s argument in your own words, using a mousetrap as an illustration, how would you do it?
3. Charles Darwin conceded that his theory would “absolutely break down” if it could be shown that any complex organ “could not possibly have been formed by numerous, slight modifications.” Behe claims he has passed this test. Why do you agree or disagree? If you believe Behe has failed, what else would he need to do in order to meet Darwin’s challenge?
4. Which of the biological systems described by Behe—cilia, bacterial flagella, the cellular transport system, or blood-clotting—was the most impressive to you? How well do you believe Behe responded to objections?
5. Behe said that when he concludes life was intelligently designed, some people “don’t just disagree; many of them jump up and down and get red in the face.” Why do you believe this issue generates so much controversy? Do you feel an emotional investment in the matter? How so?

Chapter Nine:

The Evidence of Biological Information

1. If you were a teacher evaluating Stephen Meyer on how well he defended his thesis that DNA is best explained by an intelligent cause, what grade would you give him? What two or three reasons would you give in defending that grade?
2. While scientists are virtually unanimous in ruling out random chance for the origin of life, this theory is still prevalent in popular opinion. What's your assessment of the odds that life could have assembled by chance? Do you agree or disagree with Meyer's conclusion that believing in chance is like invoking a "naturalistic miracle"?
3. Meyer also critiqued two other scenarios—that natural selection or self-ordering tendencies could have been responsible for the origin of life. In light of his analysis, do you believe either of those possibilities has merit? Why or why not? What's your response to Meyer's assertion that only intelligent entities produce information—including the information that's spelled out in DNA's four-letter chemical alphabet?
4. Darwin admitted that the Cambrian explosion was "inexplicable" and a "valid argument" against his theory, but he predicted future fossil discoveries would vindicate **macroevolution**. Today, do you believe that the direction of the fossil evidence is pointing toward or away from Darwinism? In what ways does Darwinism successfully account for the Cambrian phenomenon? In what ways is the phenomenon consistent with intelligent design?

Chapter Ten:

The Evidence of Consciousness

1. Imagine you were asked to debate the question of whether people consist of both body and spirit or, conversely, that we are essentially “a computer made of meat.” Which proposition, in your view, carries the most weight? What evidence would you present for your side?
2. One expert said that although there’s no adequate theory of how the brain causes consciousness, he has faith that science will eventually discover a completely naturalistic explanation. Nobel-winner John Eccles calls this hope “extravagant and **unfulfillable**.” In light of the interview with J. P. Moreland, who do you think is most likely correct and why?
3. Moreland said, “You can’t get something from nothing,” and therefore human consciousness is inexplicable if the universe only consists of physical matter. However, he said that if everything were brought into being by a divine mind, then the existence of finite minds makes sense. Do you find this argument compelling? Why or why not?
4. Techno-prophet Ray Kurzweil raised the question of whether computers might someday develop consciousness. Based on the evidence and arguments by Moreland, what’s your opinion on this issue and why?

Chapter Eleven:

The Cumulative Case for a Creator

1. After recapping the evidence, the author concludes that Darwinism “was simply too far-fetched to be credible.” After reading through his summary of the scientific data, do you agree or disagree? What evidence prompts you to come to your conclusion?
2. The author reiterates discoveries from six scientific disciplines and says, in his opinion, the positive evidence for an intelligent designer is “credible, cogent, and compelling.” As you consider the testimony by experts presented in this book, do you believe a sufficient case has been made for a Creator? Why? What facts tipped the scale for you in one direction or the other?
3. The portrait of the Creator that emerges from the scientific data, says the author, is “uncannily consistent” with the description of God in the Bible. Do you believe his analysis is reasonable? Why or why not? When you add the historical information about Jesus contained in the appendix, what’s your assessment of the credibility of Christianity?
4. Physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne says “religious knowledge is more demanding than scientific knowledge” because it calls for “the response of commitment to the truth discovered.” How do you believe you should personally respond to the evidence you’ve encountered in this book? If you decide to pursue the three-pronged approach that Viggo Olsen discussed, what specific steps do you plan to take? What do you think your biggest obstacle will be and how will you overcome it? Or are you at a point where you feel you should respond to the evidence like Olsen and the author did—by praying to receive Jesus as your forgiver and leader? What implications would such a decision hold for you personally?