

Week 1, Day 1: Faith, Science, and the Struggles of Life

Dr. Frances Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health until his retirement in 2021, made the following statement: *“One of the greatest tragedies of our time is this impression that has been created that science and religion have to be at war.”*

We live in a time of great conflict and division. Let us understand from the start that there has been war from the very moment Adam and Eve fell into sin. The conflict between faith and science is just another battleground for the war humans have waged against a loving and creating God. As Solomon stated, **“There is nothing new under the sun”** (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Therefore, it shouldn't surprise us that events around us can cause conflict and struggle. As Christians, we realize God empowers us in the battle before us. Over the next several weeks, these devotions are going to take us on a walk through the battlefields of life and find strength in the power of our Lord and Savior. Where do we begin? We, first of all, begin by identifying on which side we stand. Whose soldiers are we? For whom do we fight?

As we survey the battlefield, every one of us would identify with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are on his side. Right? Unfortunately, every Christian has been tempted to switch sides and fight for their own rights or the rights of the unbelieving world. Even Paul had this problem:

Romans 7:21-24:

²¹So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. ²²I certainly delight in God's law according to my inner self, ²³but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members. ²⁴What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

The battles of life continue to press not just from without – but from within. As we face the struggles, we all have to remember that we have a sinful nature that would align itself with the sinful world. The battle is real and inside us. Is there hope to win? Absolutely! Paul says:

Romans 7: 25:

²⁵I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The war is won through our Savior. When Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday morning, he proclaimed victory over sin and triumph over Satan. When the Gospel burst into your heart in the waters of Holy Baptism, he scattered the darkness of sin and gave the triumph to you. We live in the power of the Easter victory. Over the next several weeks of devotions, we are going to view the various battles of life such as:

- Abortion
- End-of-life issues

- Acceptance or rejection of treatment options
- Decision-making on the use of a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) order
- A Christian's view of vaccines
- Is it "my body, my choice"?

As we view these battles of life, we need to remember to look at our lives vertically, connected to our Savior. We are tempted to look at our lives horizontally in our relationships with each other. The Christian, first and foremost, remembers his or her identity. We are tempted to jump into the struggles and issues before us without setting the foundation. You are asked to be patient and take time to be refreshed in our core truths so we can apply them to our struggles. To start with, we will keep this truth in mind:

God's Truth #1: In the battles of life, I live as a created and baptized child of God.

Question for Reflection: Do I daily reflect on my true identity, and does it direct my decisions?

Week 1, Day 2: Faith, Science, and the Struggles of Life

Dr. Frances Collins, the former head of the National Institutes of Health, made this statement: *“One of the greatest tragedies of our time is this impression that has been created that science and religion have to be at war.”* We do find this war waging in our world. We need to ask ourselves: *“What is science?”*

Philosopher and scientist George Henry Lewes stated: *“Science is the systematic classification of experience.”* In other words, science is the knowledge we obtain by looking at how things work. Martin Luther stated: *“Science gives man knowledge which is power; religion gives man wisdom which is control.”* For Martin Luther, religion and science did not need to be at war with each other as long as people understood the roles and relationships. The writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 11:6:

‘And without faith it is impossible to please God. Indeed, it is necessary for the one who approaches God to believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Faith in God is the key. In the battles of life, in the moral and ethical struggles, as a baptized child of God, we live by faith. Faith at its very essence is trust. We trust in God. Science is always to be subjected to faith. Science is always to be about observing the created world and marveling at how God made it. In one of his talks, Martin Luther echoed this statement: *“We are at the dawn of a new era, for we are beginning to recover the knowledge of the external world that was lost through the fall of Adam. We now observe creatures properly.... But by the grace of God we already recognize in the most delicate flower the wonders of divine goodness and omnipotence.”*

We are always children seeking to understand the marvelous working of our heavenly Father. The more we see what he has done, the more we stand in awe of his power and wisdom. One comedian jokingly said of science: *“We are ripping the face off of creation and saying to the Creator, ‘I see what you did.’”* Unfortunately, that comedian does not believe what he just said. In science, we can peel back creation and see the amazing design of our God. Yet, we do all this in faith. We need to remember that the unbeliever does not comprehend or accept faith. But we also struggle. As we continue to unravel the mysteries of God’s world, we are still children – sinful children. We will struggle with our knowledge. But through faith, we will have control through our Lord Jesus.

God’s Truth #2: In the battles of life, I fight by faith.

Question for reflection: Do I daily reflect on my true identity in faith, and does it direct my decisions?

Week 1, Day 3: Faith, Science, and the Struggles of Life

“Pastor, could you please come to the hospital to help us make some decisions about Dad?” I was asked to discuss some medical issues with a family. Dad was deteriorating because of brain tumors. The doctor had recommended halting treatments. He would not survive, and the treatments would only prolong the suffering. *“Pastor, what should we do?”* I have been asked that question many times. It is quite possible that every one of us will face at least one bioethical decision in our lifetime. We will be asked to make difficult decisions. “Bio” means life. “Ethics” are the moral principles that govern our behavior or life. “Bioethics” describes the moral principles that govern our life particularly in medical issues. However, bioethics is broader than medical ethics. It deals with all of our decisions concerning our lives in general. Over the past two days, we have been reminded that we live by faith as God’s created and baptized children, purchased and bought with the blood of Christ. Our identity motivates, inspires, and directs our decisions.

Two thousand years ago, God himself took on human flesh. We believe the claim in the Gospel of John that the **“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** Paul proclaimed, **“In Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.”** Jesus took on humanity because we are humans in order to save us. In the Rite of Committal, we read at the graveside:

*May God the Father, who created this body;
May God the Son, who by his blood redeemed this body together with the soul;
May God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be his temple;
keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.*

If we are this concerned about the body in death, so God wants us to be concerned our bodies while we are still alive. Yes, we know that heaven is a far better place, and it is our home. Yet, God has still built inside of us a desire to preserve life. For what purpose? Paul answers this question:

1 Corinthians 10:31:

³¹So whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do everything to the glory of God.

Our identity as baptized children of God leads us to want every decision to give glory to God. What we eat or drink affects the health of the body. These are bioethical decisions. Are we giving God glory by what we eat or drink? Physical care of the body such as consistent exercise routines are bioethical decisions. Does our upkeep of the body give God glory? This is also true about the decisions concerning medical treatments, surgeries, and even vaccines. Will these treatments, these surgeries, or these vaccines give glory to God? In all of our bioethical decisions, we want to look upward to our Lord and seek to give him glory in our lives.

At the same time, we need to remember that often our knowledge is incomplete or evolving. For example, in the Middle Ages, people realized that amputating a gangrenous limb improved the chances of the patient’s survival. Was there an obligation to undergo the gruesome procedure of

sawing off a limb with crude tools, the possibility of infection, and no anesthesia? It was advised by the Church of the day that such an extraordinary measure was a matter of individual conscience. But, our individual conscience needs to be directed by the Word so that we give all glory to God.

Too often, we are tempted to make our decisions horizontally. In other words, how does my decision affect myself or others? The Bible exhorts us to make our decisions vertically. How does this affect my relationship with my God? How will this decision give him glory?

“Pastor, what should I do?” Very rarely do I give advice on what to do. Instead, we will sit together and talk about why we are to make the decisions we do. It is not always easy, but as created and baptized children of God, who live by faith, we will remember...

God’s Truth #3: In the battles of life, I live to give glory to God.

Question for Reflection: Will my decisions today give glory to God? How?

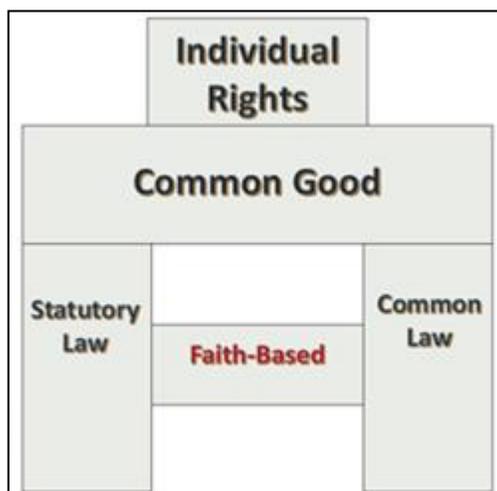
Week 1, Day 4: Faith, Science, and the Struggles of Life

Giving glory to God is a hard thing because we are, by human nature, self-centered people. During times of struggle or illness, the temptation to become even more self-centered dominates our hearts. It is hard to think about giving glory to God when the body is in pain or the heart is breaking. In the book, *90 minutes in heaven*, Don Piper, a Baptist minister, is pronounced dead at the scene of an accident involving a semi-truck. He describes 90 minutes in heaven before he comes back. The book details his excruciating recovery. Even though he was a Christian minister, he became very bitter and focused inward; he allowed his self-pity to grow with each day. The story goes on to explain a time when an elderly minister came to visit him, saying, “Don, you are not doing this very well.” “Not doing this very well?” the young injured minister replied. “Don’t you see the pain I am in, the suffering I am enduring?” The older minister patiently led this young man to see how he failed to give glory to God or express his faith in the midst of his suffering. Yes, the suffering was intense – no one could deny that. Even in the times of most intense pain, we should remember to give glory to God. However, the sinful nature remains in each of us. Paul speaks of this when he makes a sad commentary on some of his fellow Christians.

Philippians 2:21:

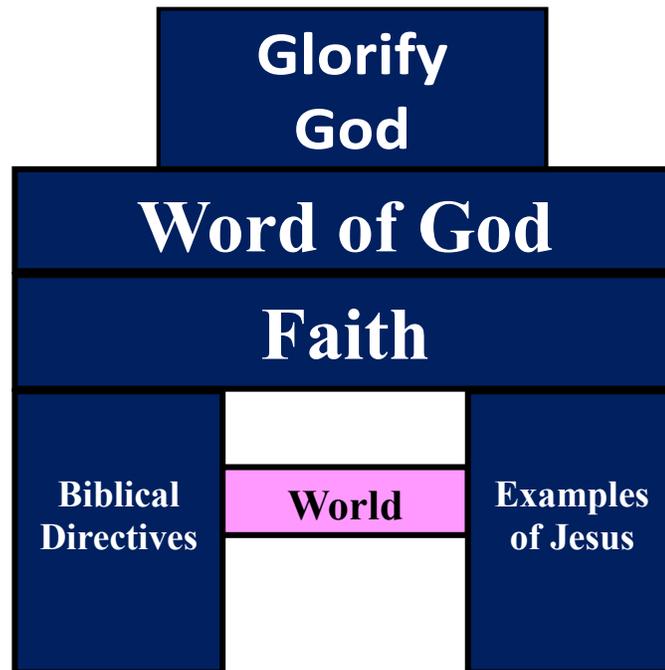
²¹For, the others all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Paul was affected by the self-centeredness of Christians around him. Even Christians are affected by the world’s model for living. In a class on Christian Bioethics, it was pointed out that this is the world’s model for living:



According to the world’s model, our individual rights are preeminent. They are the chief concern for our lives. After that, we then might consider what is for the common good. This is often affected by the laws we enact in our society. Finally, we might consider how faith-based institutions should play into our world view. But, the world’s view is always self-focused, inward focused.

Rather, we are to consider the Christian Model for living in a sin-filled and struggle-filled world:



As created and baptized children of God, we live to give glory to God who loved us with a saving love. Our lives are dictated by the Word of God and expressed by faith. The Bible gives us the examples of Jesus and certain directives to help us in our Christian living. The Bible tells us:

1 Peter 2:21:

²¹Indeed, you were called to do this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you would follow in his steps.

In the book, *90 minutes in heaven*, the older pastor was not being insensitive when he spoke as directly as he did to the young pastor. He was reminding him who he was. His identity was to be shining through – no matter the trial. When that young pastor laid in his bed of suffering, instead of looking inward, he should have looked up to Calvary and the cross of our dear Savior. We will never suffer as much as Christ suffered. Our sufferings are different. Christ suffered for us and earned our salvation. Our struggles and sufferings in life are a result of sin in this sin-filled world. Yet, we live and we suffer as created and baptized of God. No matter the struggle, this is to be our goal:

Truth #4: In the battles of life, I live to follow the path of my Savior.

Question for Reflection: When I struggle, do I follow Jesus' examples, or do I look inward with self-pity?

Week 1, Day 5: Faith, Science, and the Struggles of Life

We started this week with Dr. Frances Collins' statement: *"One of the greatest tragedies of our time is this impression that has been created that science and religion have to be at war."*

We live in divided and conflicted times. The truth is that it is not science and religion that are at war. The war is the struggle that exists in the heart of humans who seek to use and misuse both science and religion for their own purposes. This week, the Bible once again reminds us that we are created and baptized children of God who live our lives out of faith to the glory of God. All of our decisions, bioethical or otherwise, are to be made to God's glory. The Apostle Paul gives us one more final exhortation:

Philippians 2:3-5:

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility consider one another better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look carefully not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Indeed, let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Pride sits in the heart and seeks to be the center of all our actions. Pride puts itself first. Pride is an attitude that dominates the sinful heart. Yet as fellow created and baptized children of God, we are not to be dominated by the pride in our sinful heart. Our Savior set aside all of his own interests to tend to our needs. His attitude was humility and love. His attitude was to sacrifice and serve us. In his amazing and loving humility, he stepped between us and Satan, sin and death. He suffered unimaginable sufferings so that we never have to suffer for our sins. He struggled with unimaginable struggles to set us free from the bondage to sin and death.

Now as created and baptized children of God, we are to have this same attitude. Following the example of Jesus, we put others first. We love others before ourselves.

In the weeks to come, we will explore some of the bioethical struggles we may have to face in life such as end-of-life issues, a Christian's view of vaccines, the acceptance or rejection of treatments, or options involving a "Do Not Resuscitate" order.

Before we can look at these issues, we need to remind ourselves about the foundation of all our decisions. We are created and baptized children of God who live by faith to give glory to God as well as follow the path of our Savior. In so doing, we also remember...

God's Truth #5: In the battles of life, I live to love my neighbor.

For Reflection:

- We often indicate what kind of death we would like to die. When we do, are we thinking about ourselves or our families?

- When we make plans for our funeral, do we plan it based on our likes and preferences, or do we consider what would be best for those who remain behind? The funeral is not for the dead but the living.
- If we refuse to take medicine or go to the doctor, are we thinking about ourselves, or are we considering how our actions or inactions might affect our families and loved ones?
- What is our attitude when we suffer?

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