

**Collins Examines Christianity  
(Last in SERIES of 3)**

VOICE: By one measurement, rice is more complicated than humans. Geneticist Dr. Francis Collins explains.

PROF.: And Dr. Collins discovered another fact: Before we can learn something true, we need to unlearn a falsehood. Truth won't grow in ground that's full of weeds.

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

PROF.: Twenty years ago, geneticists predicted that the human genetic structure would contain about 100,000 genes. Many genetics textbooks still carry that mistaken 20-year-old estimate.

As director of the Human Genome Project, Dr. Francis Collins said that when research revealed that humans really have only about 22,000 genes, some people felt offended. He compared that to 25,000 genes for mustard weed and 55,000 for rice. The audience laughed when he said, "So you need to have more respect for dinner tonight!"

VOICE: Dr. Collins also learned that some of the ideas he had about God were mistaken. In a lecture, he gave this insight into his personal background...

PROF. #2: I'm a physician, I'm a scientist and I'm a Christian. I did not grow up in the Christian tradition. In fact, as a graduate student in physical chemistry in the early 1970's, I was an obnoxious atheist with whom you would not have enjoyed going to lunch. I saw it as part of my role at that time of my life to try to discourage anybody from silly ideas about the supernatural. I was well along the reductionist path, believing that anything that really mattered could be described by the tools of science and reduced to mathematics.

But my career took a turn shortly after that as I began to realize that the science of quantum mechanics was not going to sustain me over the course of a lifetime. Despite its intrinsic interest, it was a little too abstract for me.

And so in an unpredictable decision, and one that still amazes me that the admissions committee went along with, I decided to go to medical school.

And there in medical school I encountered people who were facing great challenges in their lives. And as I listened to some of them talk about how their faith gave them great strength, I found this very puzzling. I assumed this was a psychological crutch, but it certainly was a powerful one.

I had to confront the reality of the fact that I'd never really looked at the evidence for and against the existence of God. It had been very convenient for God not to exist. I had adopted a form of what C. S. Lewis has called willful blindness, because it made it easier to do what I wanted to do.

PROF. #2: But as a scientist, to arrive at a conclusion without having considered the evidence – that seemed like the worst possible thing for me to do. And so I set about trying to strengthen my atheistic position by looking at some of the arguments for and against the existence of God, especially a God who cares about individuals like you and me. I figured that would be an easy task.

Well, as I puzzled over descriptions of the various world religions, ultimately I went down the street to visit with a pastor. I asked him all sorts of off-the-wall and probably blasphemous questions about what this all meant.

He patiently listened to me and suggested that besides reading all those other descriptions, it might be good if I actually picked up the Bible – especially the book of John – to have a look at what God said. And he also pointed me to a little book on his shelf called *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis.

I went home and began to read. And all of my arguments against the plausibility of faith were immediately revealed as being the arguments of a schoolboy. Lewis in particular seemed to be able to read my mind, because he had followed this same path as an atheist who set about to disprove faith and ultimately converted himself by accident.

He always seemed to be one step ahead of me. Just as I was about to raise an objection on one page, on the next page there was the answer.

So the hound of heaven began chasing after me and chased for a good two years as I gradually began to recognize that it was more plausible to believe in God than not to believe in God.

But I also realized that making that ultimate decision is not something you do entirely with your intellect. It was something you have to do with your heart. And on a beautiful afternoon...as I hiked through the mountains, it became irresistible for me to go another moment without giving my life to Jesus Christ.

I was 27 [years old]. I was already on a pathway towards the study of genetics. And as I began to share my experience with some of my colleagues, they looked a little horrified. And they said, “Do you realize that you’ve just dedicated your life to something that is going to be totally incompatible with your scientific interests?” I didn’t think that ought to be true. And I’m here today to tell you this morning that is not true. ***The study of genetics is a glorious way of looking into God’s creation.*** And the ability to be a scientist who is able to uncover bits and pieces of the amazing intricacies of the human body is also an opportunity to worship almighty God.

So I see no conflict whatsoever in being a rigorous scientist who has to see the data before accepting any conclusion about nature, and in being a person who sees almighty God as the author of the whole thing.

I’m convinced that the study of the science of genomics is a wonderful way to get a little glimpse of God’s mind. God is the greatest scientist. God designed all of this. God doesn’t need us to protect Him from the tools of science. He designed them in the first place.

In fact, God is really the only connection that’s going to help me with the big questions of life, like “Why are we all here anyway?” “What’s this all about?” And “What happens after we die?”

- VOICE: Let me make sure I understand what we just heard. Dr. Francis Collins, one of the world's most respected geneticists, was once an atheist.
- PROF.: Yes. During his university years he enjoyed ridiculing people who believed God existed.
- VOICE: And the first thing that made him doubt his atheism, was the way he saw Christians respond to the news that they were seriously ill and would probably not recover.
- PROF.: Yes. Many patients who were not followers of Christ, would panic and become depressed. Christian patients would be confident that their lives would continue after death. They would live in heaven, where sickness and death do not exist.  
The Apostle Paul wrote that for him and other followers of Jesus Christ, "To die is gain." (Philippians 1:21).
- VOICE: A second thought that eroded his atheism, was the realization that he was not being scientific when he rejected the idea of God without examining the evidence. So he went to talk with a pastor.
- PROF.: Yes. The pastor challenged him to examine the evidence about the life of Jesus Christ, by reading the Bible – specifically, the Gospel of John.  
Next he read a book that an atheistic professor wrote after he became a Christian – *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis.
- VOICE: That's the book that seemed to read his mind. Dr. Collins made that amazing statement, "Just as I was about to raise an objection on one page, on the next page there was the answer."
- PROF.: Yes. Dr. Collins also said, "God gave us a spirit that longs for Him. He also gave us a mind that seeks to understand nature, and he gave us the knowledge of right and wrong."  
And his closing summary statement was so totally appropriate: "In fact, God is really the only connection that's going to help me with the big questions of life, like 'Why are we all here anyway?' 'What's this all about?' And 'What happens after we die?'"  
Only the Bible provides satisfying answers to those vitally important questions.

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