



# Conducting Meaningful Conversations in Faith and Science

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*As Christians interested in the nexus of science and religion, we sometimes find ourselves in conversation with—or even making presentations to—persons who hold racially opposing views from our own.*

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## Meaningful Conversation:

*An exchange wherein both sides truly hear each other, and some kind of change is either generated or at least made possible because of that conversation.*



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# On the Need for Contextualization

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# On the Need for Contextualization

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Contextualization:

“efforts of formulating, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency.”

Wan, Enoch. “Critiquing the Method of Traditional Western Theology and Calling for Sino-Theology.”

# On the Need for Contextualization

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Contextualization:

To simplify, for purposes of this presentation, contextualization is appropriately packaging a message during a conversation, so that it can be heard by someone who does not share the speaker's ethos.

# Resources on Contextualization and Syncretism

- Hesselgrave, David J. *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991 [pg. 138-144]
- Kraft, Charles H. *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1996. [pg. 375-377]
- Lusbetak, Louis J. *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1996. [pg. 360-373]



# Contextualized Conversation

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- Over-identification of message with receptor culture = syncretism
- Under-identification of message with receptor culture = syncretism/imperialism
- Correct identification of message with receptor culture = contextualization

# On the Need for Contextualization

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*a contextualized conversation regarding matters of faith and science, neither simply confirms another's point of view, nor disregards that point of view, but instead accurately communicates a message within that point of view.*

# On the Power of Relationship

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# On the Power of Relationships

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- “One of the great successes of the project has been the development of life-giving relationships...”\*
- “AAAS has provided me with a network of project partners and scientists with whom I can consult.”\*

\*Quotes from AAAS DoSER, “Science for Seminaries Final Report.” November 2016.

# On the Power of Relationships

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*It is the super-power of relationships that they not only facilitate contextualized conversations, they open people to a free-flow of ideas.*

# Practical Steps for Creating Relationships and Developing Meaningful Conversations

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# Steps for Creating Relationships and Developing Meaningful Conversations

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1. Willingness to interact with others, to “walk into places” that are often avoided by our peer group.
2. Purposeful development of relationships with others who do not share our views,
3. Seeking first to understand others and ourselves, particularly when feeling judgmental or defensive as we interact with the other.

# Steps for Creating Relationships and Developing Meaningful Conversations

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Turn to Wonder:

“If you feel judgmental or defensive when someone else is sharing, ask yourself: *I wonder what brought him/her to this belief? I wonder what he/she is feeling right now? I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?*”

From Scazzero, Peter and Geri. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Workbook*.



# Conclusion

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# Conclusion

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*When we are able to communicate and hear contextualized messages in a circle of friendship, then we are able to move away from the dehumanizing and alienating stereotypes that poison successful faith and science conversation into the truly interesting questions that likely attracted us to this conversation in the first place.*

# Conclusion

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- What is the nature of humankind?
- What is the nature of God
- What is the nature of reality?
- What is admissible as knowledge?
- In what ways has and does God act in the world.
- And how do our spiritual experiences shape who we are today and how we view the word.

# Conclusion

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*When we connect with others at this level, we find those others are not so other in their desire to explore these questions, and we move to a place where our conversations are meaningful, indeed.*

# Sources Cited

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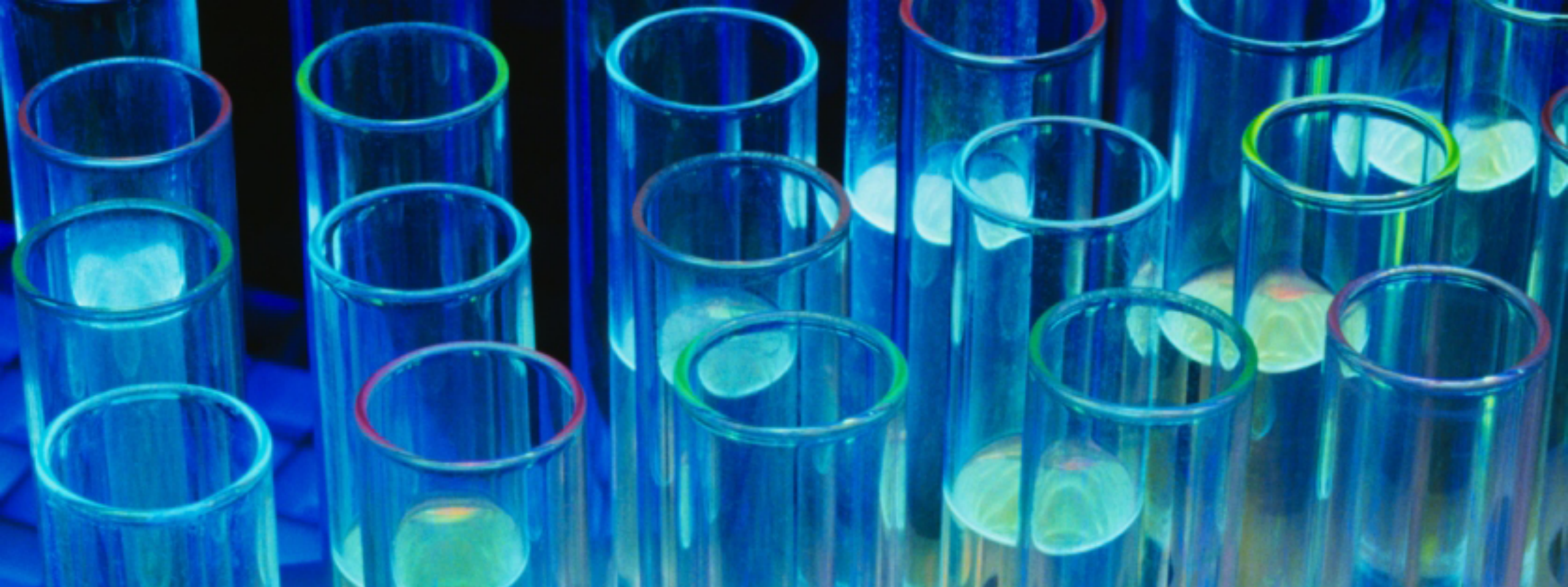
AAAS DoSER, “Science for Seminaries Final Report.” November 2016. <http://www.scienceforseminaries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ScienceforSeminariesFinalReportPublished-1.pdf>. (July 29, 2017). [pg. 11]

Scazzero, Peter and Geri. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Workbook*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.. [pg. 13]

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