



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: God's Fingerprints on the Universe

Guest(s): Dr. Mark Hartwig and Dr. William Dembski

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and I have a question for you to start today's program. Have you ever looked up at the night sky and wondered how it all got there? Well, on today's edition of Family Talk, Dr. Dobson sits down with two distinguished scholars, Dr. Mark Hartwig and Dr. William Dembski to explore the case for intelligent design. Between them, these two men bring decades of research in mathematics, philosophy, and science to a question that matters deeply. And that is, does the breathtaking complexity of our universe point to random chance or to a purposeful creator? Here now is Dr. James Dobson to introduce today's Family Talk broadcast.
- Dr. James Dobson: This is very deep and troubled water to some degree that we're wading into today because it takes us into the highly emotional controversy regarding the origins of the universe. It's a subject that creates great passion for people, doesn't it? Explain why.
- Dr. William Dembski: Well, I think you have a scientific world that with the rise of modern science, maybe 300 years ago, really wanted to get rid of design. It didn't start out quite that way, but basically the way modern science developed, there was really no place for design to become detectable. It was particles in motion according to blind natural forces. And so any sort of design would have had to be inputted miraculously. And as a materialistic mindset set in, there's really no place for any sort of divine input after a while. And so what intelligent design is doing and why it's so controversial is because it promises to redefine science. I mean, it's saying intelligence is something that we can do science with. We can identify intelligence. It's objectifiable. It's something we can get a handle on mathematically and empirically by looking at the world. And that's just very threatening to people.
- Dr. James Dobson: When you look at the universe and see the order and symmetry and design and beauty and function, how can anyone really deny that there was a designer of all this, an intelligent designer? I find it very difficult. I know that's a naive question considering a controversy in academia, but it really does boggle my mind to think that people believe all this evolved on its own.

Dr. William Dembski: Yeah. Well, it starts out, I mean, the word design is all over the place in biology and in the sciences generally, but what's meant these days is apparent design. And the reason for that is yes, things appear as though they're contrived or could have been from the hand of a designer. But if you can explain that appearance of design by purely natural process, then why do you need to invoke an intelligent designer, a creator God, for instance? This was the great triumph, at least this is how it's presented, of Darwin's theory, that he gave us a way of explaining the apparent design in nature without the need of a designer. And that's why somebody like Richard Dawkins will start his book. Richard Dawkins is a well-known Darwinist who would write biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.

That's on page one of his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*. Then he needs 350 pages to explain why it's only an appearance of design, why it's not actual design. And what intelligent design does is show that the design in nature is actual, that it's not just an appearance of design.

Dr. James Dobson: Mark, answered the same question with regard to the beauty and complexity of the universe and why people have such difficulty attributing that to the Creator.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: I think the idea that the world was designed has been around for a long, long time. And even with science, the way it is today, it hasn't completely gone away. Like the Richard Dawkins quote, Francis Crick, who's a Nobel winner, and he co-discovered the structure of DNA. He says, "Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see before them was not created, but rather evolved."

And I think that what we've had to do in our society is educate ourselves out of this perception, to teach ourselves not to see it. And we've gotten to the point now where we're so used to thinking of a sort of a faith knowledge dichotomy. We think of religion as being up here somewhere that you believe in spite of the facts sometimes and science as real knowledge that you can trust. We're not used to the fact that this stuff up here could become actual knowledge. And the problem is once you believe that, that changes how we live our lives and how we speak in society.

Dr. James Dobson: It affects everything, doesn't it?

Dr. Mark Hartwig: It affects everything because our society, our education system is all built around the notion that religion is a matter of personal preference to be kept out of the public. Now all of a sudden, it's legitimate knowledge to be talked about everywhere and acted on, God forbid.

Dr. James Dobson: Why do you think so many professors on Christian college campuses who teach biology reject the idea of intelligent design?

Dr. William Dembski: I think there are perhaps a number of reasons. I think one is the sense of wanting to maintain credibility. And I don't mean it in a bad sense, but doing rigorous science and feeling that what's been done in the name of intelligent design or creation hasn't been quite rigorous enough, and then perhaps feeling burned by some of the work that's been done there. So I think that's one concern. The sense that it's also going to redefine the nature of science. I mean, I think a lot of scientists in the Christian community take a more, what's called a two spheres view. There's a science, we're just going to do that, be good scientists as the secular world does it, but then I'll have my faith and I'm going to live that out. But connecting the two in any sort of meaningful way, that tends to get short shrift.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that what Jesus referred to as a double-minded man?

Dr. William Dembski: Well, I don't want to speculate on that because it's been a real struggle, I think culturally, because if you go back in the last century and what's happened in the Christian world, I mean, there was a huge move towards liberalism, rejection of the Scriptures. And then I think people had to retrench the Christian community. And now it's trying to come out of that. I mean, all the great schools used to be Christian schools. I mean, Harvard, Yale, all of that, but they all left the faith completely really. And so now-

Dr. James Dobson: And are antagonistic to it.

Dr. William Dembski: And then you have the faculty at Christian colleges and universities, they've been trained largely at these institutions. So they've imbibed a lot of the thinking there. It's tough. I don't want to speak against them because I think in many cases, they're doing the best they can, but I think when you imbibe what the culture gives you, I mean, Jesus is a countercultural figure. I mean, He's not going with the flow. He's going against the flow. And I think this is intelligent design is making these tough questions real in a way that's very threatening to the secular community. And I think the Christian faculty have ... I think they're going to be reluctant to give up their credibility with the secular community unless they're actually really convinced that there's something good going on here. And frankly, intelligent design is pretty new on the scene. So we've got also some proving to do that. What we're about is really going to hold up.

Dr. James Dobson: Mark, address the same issue of the Christian College campuses. Those of our listeners who've been with us for a while know that I have been very, very explicit in supporting Christian education at all levels. I really do believe in it. And I wrote one of my monthly letters some years ago, four or five years ago on why you ought to consider speaking to parents, sending your kids to a Christian school, because what's going on in the university campuses is often antithetical to everything that we believe. And I sent that letter to 2.5 million people or so, and it has been picked up by Christian colleges and used by the millions, I think, to kind of make the case for Christian education and raise money and so on. So I'm a supporter of Christian education. So my question to you comes out of that support. I am concerned, and I'm not terribly knowledgeable of this subject, but

I am concerned that there's a lack of what I would call orthodoxy on some of these issues. Are you?

Dr. Mark Hartwig: I am very concerned about it. It's not as if every college has a problem or as if the problem is in every part of the college, but you can't go to a campus and assume that every department and every professor is going to hold to something that's near Orthodox Christianity. And I speak from personal experience because I went to a Christian liberal arts college myself and I got a very good education. I'll have to tell you that, that by the time I got to grad school, I was conversant in issues that these people were just starting to learn. But I also picked up a lot of flawed beliefs, a lot of beliefs that led me away from the faith, not that I lost it entirely, but there were some very hard issues that I had to face that I think I was misled on. And it's taken me two decades to get over some of this stuff.

Dr. James Dobson: How common would the view be that Adam and Eve were evolved creatures in whom God breathed life and eternal life and the characteristics that we now know as mankind? How common is that compared with a more literal interpretation of Genesis 1, where Adam was created from the dust and Eve was taken from Adam and so on?

Dr. Mark Hartwig: I'd say it's very common from the professors I've talked to and met. And it's primarily because they want everything to fit together nicely. And so once they've committed themselves to the idea that there's been evolution, they feel like they have to include Adam and Eve in that process.

Dr. James Dobson: Mark, is it your impression that the parents of students who go to Christian colleges are probably considerably more conservative on some of these issues than the faculties would be?

Dr. Mark Hartwig: Oh, I would say absolutely. Most parents don't really know what's taught at the colleges, colleges and universities. They just know that there's say a college in their denomination, so they send their kid there or somewhere else and they just assume that everything is just fine and everything is Orthodox, when in fact, they don't really know what's being taught in the classes.

Roger Marsh: While we've reached the midpoint of today's edition of Family Talk, I'm Roger Marsh, Dr. James Dobson's guests, Dr. Mark Hartwig and Dr. William Dembski. The conversation continued now with a Q&A session featuring some college students who are with us in studio. Let's listen in now.

Speaker 6: Okay. My name is Ben Sons and I'm from Mississippi.

Dr. James Dobson: What school?

Speaker 6: I go to Mississippi College, a Baptist school, about 4,000 students. Dr. Dembski, during the program, I was wondering what are some statistics you've gained or

some of the probabilities and things you've gained that show that intelligent design does exist?

Dr. William Dembski: Yeah. Well, one thing I didn't get into was the actual methods for detecting design. And there's statistical methodologies. I mean, the basic idea is you need something that's highly improbable or complex, and you also need something that has the right sort of pattern. So if you remember the movie *Contact*, it was a long sequence of prime numbers. Okay, so that length, that's complex or improbable, but then there's also a pattern there. It's not just enough to have improbability. You can just flip a coin. That's going to be a highly improbable sequence. If you flip long enough, but it's not going to have any sort of pattern that's going to reliably take you to intelligence. And so you need those two things. So there's a lot of statistical apparatus that I need to develop, but then once it's there, then you start applying it to biological systems. Now, the application also can be tricky because you have to be able to get a handle on the numbers. So that's the idea.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. We'll work our way across. Why don't you pick one in here somewhere?

Speaker 7: My name is Samuel Okum. I'm from Orlando, Florida. I just graduated from Lehigh University. My question is, I'm an elected biology major. And so of course in every single class that I've taken biology wise, they've given us time periods of billions and billions of years, those kind of things. Will your mathematical statistics, whether in the book that you've put out now or future books, address that time period, it always seemed to me that that time period's nowhere near long enough for the kind of chance that they're looking for in evolution.

Dr. William Dembski: Right. I mean, that's the problem. I mean, we often, I think in the creation evolution controversy, the issue is, or the question of time comes up. Young earth creationists argue for 6,000 year or 10,000 year earth or something on that order. But what if we have four billion years in that in place? Billions, often we think, gee, that's just humongous, but that still doesn't cut any ice. I mean, it's still not nearly enough. I mean, one way I illustrate this is imagine that we have a massive revision of the criminal justice system. And instead of being assigned a fixed number of years for your offense, you're assigned to flip a coin and get a fixed number of heads before you can leave prison. So on average, maybe it would take to get 23 heads in a row, you could do that in 10 years if you're flipping about one coin every five seconds.

But what if you had to flip a hundred heads in a row or a thousand heads in a row? If it's a thousand heads in a row, you could have every elementary particle in the universe flipping a coin at the fastest rate possible. You're still not going to get a thousand heads in a row. So that's the problem. The design problem doesn't go away just because you add a few zeros to your time, to the amount of time that you give it. The complexities that you get in biology are way beyond that.

Speaker 8: My name is Mike Norwood. I'm from Memphis, Tennessee. On a personal basis, I would just like to ask, what pathway did you take in coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as far as did you come from an atheistic background yourself? Did you grow up in a Christian family? And then secondly, if you were on an extended flight somewhere and an atheist were sitting next to you and began to engage you in questions, what would you particularly emphasize in order to persuade or show them your point of view as far as intelligent design?

Dr. William Dembski: In terms of faith journey, I mean, I started, I was born in 1960. So I was in the '70s, I was not raised in what I would call a Christian home. I mean, I was nominally Catholic, so I jumped the proper hoops at the proper times, but I had no faith. In fact, I remember consciously rejecting the idea that Jesus was God incarnate in high school. I was much more influenced by what nowadays would be called new age thinking. But it was after I got out of high school, I was actually taking a year off from college. My mother had become a Christian, gave me some books to read. I started reading the Scripture and considering the claims of Christ. And God was working on my heart, and that's how it was. And I think what was really the turning point for me was the sense that in God becoming human in Jesus Christ, that there was a real connection because I had some sort of vague belief in God, but God seemed very distant.

And I thought, this really means that I can relate to God in a way. And so that realization of what the incarnation meant has stuck with me all these years. In terms of dealing with an atheist on a plane, I think you got to start looking at some of these complex biological systems, and there are plenty of them there. I think the poster child of the design movement has become this bacterial flagellum, a little outboard rotary motor on the back of a bacterium, and then start asking the questions, how did that thing come about? Because it hasn't always existed in the history of the universe. And then I use that as a jumping off point to start getting into some of these statistical arguments and pointing out that we do draw design inferences all the time. And we do it in insurance claims investigation, forensic science, data falsification, in science. Even to keep science honest, we need these methods of design detection. So what's the problem when we start focusing these methods on biological systems? And what if these methods tell us that these systems are designed?

Speaker 5: Hi, my name's Hillary. I'm from North Carolina, just graduated from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. And I was wondering, I know Darwinism has been around for hundreds of years, but when do you think that theory in the school system started being taught as a fact rather than a theory?

Dr. William Dembski: Well, I mean, there's a whole history to Darwin. I mean, Darwin wrote his origin of species in 1859. I mean, that's when it appeared. Darwinism actually went into eclipse for a while. It wasn't until the '30s that it really came roaring back when it was joined to genetics, some work that was going on then. So I think it has become within the last probably 30, 40 years, the primary game in town for the biology community. I think the way science works, you take an existing theory, you take the best scientific theory that's out there and you work it. And

if there's no competitor, then that's the only game in town. And the problem is that intelligent design is not even allowed on the playing field at this point. And so that's why I don't know if people would ... A lot of biologists, if they would even put all that much emphasis on the distinction between fact and theory, it's just, this is what we have to work with.

Okay, what's your alternative? Well, intelligent design is unthinkable. I mean, we're not going to even consider that. So that's just the only thing we're devoting our attention to. So I'm not sure that the fact theory distinction is all that great. I mean, people do say, well, the fact of evolution is common dissent. The theory is the Darwinian theory, the Darwinian mechanism. But effectively in terms of how this debate is worked out, you've got to be able to get competing alternatives on the table. And that's what the Darwinian community, they have a monopoly at this point and they're reluctant to relinquish power. And I think that's one reason why we're facing so much opposition.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: I was going to say, in education, there have been a couple of distinct turning points though. One was in the late 50s, and this happened after Russia beat us into space when Sputnik went up, there was a panic in America and all sorts of money was sent for science education. Well, as part of this, it funded an organization called the Biological Science Curriculum Study. And what they were charged with doing was educating people about biology. And what they decided to do was to put evolution back into the curriculum, not just as a separate thing, but integrating throughout. That was a major impetus where we started seeing this coming in the school system. Then in the late 1980s, what we saw was more of a political move to try and stifle any dissent in the classroom. And so with the California science framework, that came out promoting evolution as a fact that you couldn't question. Now we know that was designed to stifle dissent because one of the authors boasted afterwards. He says, "As for the religious right in California, the science framework has disenfranchised them from the public schools." And that was the purpose.

Dr. James Dobson: By the way, Mark, I went to graduate school on a grant from that federal money that you just talked about.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: Oh, wow.

Dr. James Dobson: So they got a lot of folks, but they didn't get me.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: Do they know that?

Dr. James Dobson: They probably want the money back.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: That's right. And the degree.

Dr. James Dobson: I would think. You know, what concerns me, and I said this when we talked earlier today, is that the evolutionists present their views as a monolith, as this

single theory that they all agree with, and anybody who has any intelligence at all is going to accept it, when in fact, there are all kinds of contradictions and schisms and debates and controversies going on inside that so-called monolith. At the very least, it's cracked and they don't admit that.

Dr. William Dembski: Oh yeah. I mean, and especially when they have to deal with people like us, it's closed ranks and because the differences among them though, as far as they're concerned, not nearly as great as the differences between them as a group and those who are attacking naturalism, because they are agreed on naturalism. I mean, nature is fundamentally all there is. Natural forces operating in natural history is how we got everything that we've got. And intelligent design wants to say no, there's a need for an intelligence operating in conjunction with nature to produce what we see.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Let me ask you guys a really tough question. You have a senior for a son or daughter, and that youngster is trying to decide where to go to school, and he or she has grown up in the church and strongly believes what you believe, and there's harmony there in the theological perspectives, and you want them to go to a Christian school. Would you take steps to find out what the college believes or teaches in its science department, or more importantly, I think in its social science department, which may be even more off the wall from my point of view. Would those things matter to you, or would you bathe them in prayer and hope that they somehow coped with it? You wish I hadn't asked that, don't you?

Dr. William Dembski: No. Bathing in prayer and hoping that's not enough. I mean, I think you've got to inform yourself. And if I was sending a child of mine to Christian college, I'd want to vet that school very carefully. I'd want to know what sorts of policies is the administration pursuing, and what sorts of theological stance is it taking? And then I'd want to know what textbooks are being used, what's being taught in those classes, what perspectives are being pushed.

Dr. James Dobson: Would it be kind of hard to figure that out as a layman?

Dr. William Dembski: Well, it might be, but I know how the academic world operates. I would know what questions to ask, and so then I'd approach the teachers.

Dr. James Dobson: And most people wouldn't, would they?

Dr. William Dembski: That would be a useful book. Maybe that'll be a-

Dr. James Dobson: Hey, great idea.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: We've been training our kid all along. I mean, this year, my daughter confronted her eighth grade teacher on evolution on a couple of facts. She did it very politely.

Dr. James Dobson: So you're homeschooling now?

Dr. Mark Hartwig: Well, no. We have, but we do school her at home. We teach her what to watch for and we'll just say, "Honey, you just keep doing that in college."

Dr. James Dobson: And so you're preparing her to cope with whatever is thrown at her.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Dr. Mark Hartwig: And she'll go in with the knowledge because of my experience and my wife's experience with a private Christian college. Don't go in with your guard down, question things.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thank you everybody. It's been wonderful having your participation and thank you all for being here again and for answering the questions. I'm sure we've raised a few more and that's what it's all about, isn't it?

Roger Marsh: The evidence for design isn't just an academic argument, it's an invitation to stand in awe of the God who spoke galaxies into existence and still knows you and me by name. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring a fascinating conversation Dr. Dobson had with Drs. Mark Hartwig and William Dembski. To hear today's program again or to share it with a friend, visit jdfi.net.

And keep in mind before we close for this broadcast week, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and the Herzog Foundation are hosting a national essay contest for high school students and middle schoolers alike. Cash prizes available for the winners up to \$2,500, but the deadline to submit your essay is Thursday, April 30th. That's less than a week from today. For more information, go to jdfi.net. You'll find all the details there, or go to drjamesdobson.org/USA250.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.