

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 29 - AUGUST 2, 2019



IN COMMON

SERMON SERIES

June 2 - July 28

MONDAY

100,000 MILES OF NERVE FIBERS

(in just one human body!)

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

—Psalm 139:14

An article in a 2014 issue of the *National Geographic* magazine highlighted the work on the brain by Van Wedeen, M.S., MGH/Harvard U:

*... creating in unprecedented detail representations of the brain's wiring: the network of some **100,000 miles of nerve fibers, called white matter**, that connects the various components of the mind, giving rise to everything we think, feel, and perceive.¹*

Did you get that number? Note that those 100,000 miles of nerve fibers are just in one human body! Wikipedia confirms it in “White Matter” (described as “areas of the central nervous system (CNS) that are mainly made up of myelinated axons ...”) where it reads:

At the age of 20, the total length of myelinated fibers in males is 176,000 km while that of a female is 149,000 km.²

Over-simplifying a bit, the human brain is composed of individual nerve cells called **neurons**, which are made up chiefly of the main **cell body**, multiple **dendrites** (signal-receivers), and an **axon** (signal-sender). The axon is the long extension from the cell body that carries information signals from the neuron to the dendrites of the next neurons. Myelin is a fatty sheath insulating the axon and speeding the signal it carries to travel along its length at a rate of 275 mph (400 feet per second). An article titled, “Neurons: The Building Blocks of the Nervous System,”

says that if a neuron were the size of an average room, the nucleus would be the size of a tennis ball, the dendrites would be like masses of tentacles filling the room, and the axon will be one long tentacle stretching to about a mile.³

Think about it ... packed in your brain and body are super-thin yet super-organized nerve fibers that—when put end to end—would run four times around the earth (given the earth's circumference of about 25,000 miles)!

Doesn't that make you stand in greater awe, love, gratitude, and worship of our Creator God, our loving Heavenly Father? In creating man in His own image (Genesis 1:27) from the dust of the ground and breathing in him the breath of life to make him "a living soul" (Genesis 2:7), He endowed you and me with this amazing brain, said to be the "most complex structure in the universe,"⁴ to enable us to function as regular human beings, different from and vastly superior to animals. Indeed, we are fearfully and wonderfully made!

QUESTIONS

How often do you appreciate how wonderfully you are made?

PRAYERS FOR BRAZIL MISSION TEAM

Pray for the Brazil mission team visiting YWAM missionaries, Mati & Julie Gali, in Recife, Brazil, and assisting them with their ongoing ministries on the YWAM base and in the surrounding city. The team will minister alongside the YWAM staff and engage in community outreach.

TUESDAY

Genesis 1

A SUNDAY REFLECTION FOR MY HIGH SCHOOL CLASSMATES

I recently shared my faith with my high school classmates—how the growing knowledge about the world we live in has reinforced it. I wrote on Messenger the following:

Our brain's 86 billion neurons constantly interact with each other, as well as with the rest of our body, which is composed of a total of 37.2 TRILLION cells⁵ differentiated into our various organs (heart, lungs, liver, stomach, bones, muscles, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, hair, etc.).

Come to think of it, all those trillions of cells grew out of the single fertilized ovum from our parents! Following the “instructions” built into the genes supplied by my parents, that fertilized egg cell that I *once* was, rapidly multiplied into new cells that would differentiate into the various parts of my body. Finally, at a set time, I exited my mom's womb and filled my lungs with fresh air to breathe on my own! I then continued to *grow proportionately* until I reached those 37 or so trillion cells as a fully-grown person!

I used to think that to believe in God, I need to see a “miracle.” I now realize that fallacious thinking was only borne out of my own ignorance of the organized complexity of the workings of my body, interacting with the equally mind-boggling complexity of the world we live in! Random chance could not have brought it all about!

*Says one authoritative source: Just the probability of the formation of only one protein molecule (apart from bacteria or animals) is 1 in 10^{300} . The probability of this '1' actually occurring is practically nil. (In practice, probabilities smaller than 1 over 10^{50} are thought of as 'zero probability.')*⁶

Now I realize that the miracle I'm looking for is ME, YOU, and this whole WORLD we live in! And there really is an infinitely intelligent and powerful Person behind it all, and His "signature" is in everything real, in everything that exists. That person is God! And His revealed Word says, "*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1).

Dear classmates, although we are now in our 60's, the fact that "God is real" gives us hope. For His Word promises that even if we die, by our faith in Jesus Christ, He will bring us to life again with new, immortal, glorious bodies! (Philippians 3:20-21). How do we know that He can do it? If, among other things, He can pack 37 trillion super-complex cells to make us function as human beings, He can do anything!

QUESTIONS

Have we creatively shared our faith with our family, friends, and neighbors?

PRAYERS FOR BRAZIL MISSION TEAM

Give praise and thanks to the Lord for providing all the funds for the team to go to Brazil.

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139

FOUR QUADRILLION INTERCONNECTIONS?

How amazing are your thoughts concerning me, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. —Psalm 139:17-18a

Modern brain science says that there are about 100 billion brain cells, called *neurons*, that make up the adult human brain. And each neuron can have as many as 40,000 dendrites or branches that receive information from other neurons: 100,000,000,000 times 40,000 is equivalent to 4,000,000,000,000,000 (4 quadrillion) possible interconnections. If anything, that tells me the almost limitless learning capacity of a human being!

God is all-knowing. So He endowed mankind, created in His own image (Genesis 1:27), with the capacity to grow in knowledge and ability. The physical, organic component of that capacity is the marvelous human brain. By this growth in knowledge, man's appreciation of the power, goodness, wisdom, love, and glory of God also grows!

Unfortunately, it can also go the other way. By the same gift of free will, which gives love and virtue their value, mankind can also choose to do evil and offend God. The same brain, by which a person can grow in knowledge of what is good and right, can be misused to grow in knowledge of what is evil and act on that knowledge, resulting in so much pain and misery to others, including himself!

The challenge, therefore, is how to use and develop this amazing capacity for knowledge in a way that honors and glorifies God, who endowed mankind with that gift in the first place.

Thankfully, God did not leave mankind to try to figure out His will on his own. On God's own initiative, He communicated His will with people of His own choosing—Abraham and his descendants—and share this knowledge with the rest of mankind. This is not so strange: Since God gave us the ability to talk and communicate, it's not unlikely that He would also communicate with mankind. The record of that communication is our Bible.

Knowing fallen and sinful man's propensity to do wrong and evil, God lovingly enjoins us to gain wisdom, which is knowing and doing the good and right thing, knowing and doing His will.

Wisdom is the principal thing. Therefore, get wisdom.
—Proverbs 4:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. —Proverbs 1:7

QUESTIONS

We are continually bombarded with information from the news, TV, radio ads, the internet, movies, etc. What kind of knowledge are we filling our minds and brains with daily?

PRAYERS FOR BRAZIL MISSION TEAM

Pray the Lord provides more caregivers for Sarah's House (girls' group home) and Hope House (boys' group home).

THURSDAY

Genesis 1:27, 18:14, 32:27; Luke 1:27

NUMEROUS, SUCCESSIVE, SLIGHT MODIFICATIONS?

Did God create us or, as “naturalistic evolution” would have it, are we simply the result of the chance and meaningless collision of atoms and molecules, without the need for a Creator?

Charles Darwin’s seminal work *On the Origin of Species* (1859) boosted the entire scientific inquiry on how all forms of life “evolved” out of single-cell organisms or bacteria that are supposed to have spontaneously yet accidentally come into being out of the conditions that prevailed on the earth when it was “about 3 to 4 billion years old.”⁷ However, a radical check will show that the theory of evolution is itself *ultimately a blind leap of faith* and therefore unscientific, no matter how scientific sounding the voluminous literature espousing it.

The scientific method is defined as “principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and formulation of a problem, the collection of data through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses.”⁸ Darwin himself wrote: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”

A Wikipedia article shows the huge difference in the number of neurons (in billions) in the human brain (86), versus the gorilla's (33), chimpanzee's (22), etc.⁹ Following Darwin's quote, where are those human-like creatures looking more and more like us present-day humans, indicating that we are really "evolved" from ape-like creatures? Their brain neurons would have to be shown to "grow" in number from, say, the gorilla's 33 billion (which is *known*) to 38, to 43, to 48, to 53, to 58, to 63, to 68, to 73, to 78, until, voila! our own 86 billion! Ten modifications between the gorilla and the human should probably count as "numerous, successive, and slight" enough, to use Darwin's standard. So far, however, research has not come up with these creatures, and most likely never will. By his own standard, therefore, hasn't Darwin's theory absolutely broken down?

I stand firm and rejoice in my faith that I am made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), Eternal and Almighty, and to whom nothing is impossible (Genesis 18:14, 32:27; Luke 1:27). By my faith in His Son Jesus my Savior, I have eternal life (1 John 5:12). Indeed, God gives meaning and purpose to life!

QUESTIONS

Do you doubt that you are descended from the first man, Adam, who was directly created by God, or did you "evolve" from a series of ape-like creatures?

PRAYERS FOR BRAZIL MISSION TEAM

Pray for many to come to know the Lord through the new girl's prison ministry—a discipleship course taught to teenage girls in prison.

FRIDAY

Psalm 91:1-4

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD

The heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of his craftsmanship. Day and night, they keep on telling about God. Without a sound or word, silent in the skies, their message reaches out to all the world. —Psalm 91:1-4 TLB

The truth of the above passage is demonstrated in the book *The Improbable Planet* by Hugh Ross (PhD, University of Toronto).¹⁰ He brilliantly but readably draws on findings from various scientific disciplines (cosmology, astronomy, geophysics, atmospheric physics, physical chemistry, biochemistry, and the whole spectrum of the biological sciences) to demonstrate the truth that the Almighty and Eternally Living God, our Heavenly Father, created the universe with extreme care to serve as a place of habitation for mankind. After all, He made man in His own image and He had loved mankind even before time began (1 Corinthians 1:27 TLB).

The jacket introduction to the book expresses it so well:

“With his typical clarity, insight, and precision, Ross shows how recent scientific findings undermine naturalism while simultaneously providing evidence that there is a plan, purpose, and design in the universe.” (Sean McDowell, Professor, Biola University, bestselling author of over fifteen books, including *A New Kind of Apologist*)

Most of us remember the basics from science about how the Earth came to be the only known planet that contains complex life. But what most people didn't know is that the more thoroughly researchers investigate the history of our planet, the more astonishing the story of our existence becomes.

The number and complexity of the astronomical, geological, chemical, and biological features recognized as *essential* to human existence have expanded explosively within the past decade. An understanding of what is required to make possible a large human population and advanced civilizations has raised profound questions about life, our purpose, and destiny.

This fascinating book helps nonscientists understand the countless miracles that undergird the exquisitely fine-tuned planet we call home—as if Someone had us in mind all along.

It's good to read a book like this not only to strengthen our own faith but also to help the faith of our loved ones and friends and anyone else with whom we get into deep faith conversations.

QUESTIONS

What do you see when you look at the sky on a clear, starry night?

PRAYERS FOR BRAZIL MISSION TEAM

Pray that Glenkirk's mission team will be an encouragement to Mati and Julie Gali and their many other staff members who serve alongside them at the YWAM base.

Sources

1. <https://integral-options.blogspot.com/2014/01/carl-zimmer-secrets-of-brain.html>
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_matter
3. http://mraclass.zohosites.com/files/Neurons--The-Building-Blocks-of-the-Nervous-System---of---Neurons--The-Building-Blocks-of-the-Nervou_s_v1_f0j_sl.pdf
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/the-human-brain-is-the-most-complex-structure-in-the-universe-let-s-do-all-we-can-to-unravel-its-9233125.html>
5. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/there-are-372-trillion-cells-in-your-body-4941473>
6. [https://randomthoughtsinachristianwalk.wordpress.com/2016/07/09/the-teleological-argument-by-lee-strobe/\)l-summarized-expanded/](https://randomthoughtsinachristianwalk.wordpress.com/2016/07/09/the-teleological-argument-by-lee-strobe/)l-summarized-expanded/)
7. <https://www.thoughtco.com/introduction-to-evolution-130035>
8. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scientific%20method>
9. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_animals_by_number_of_neurons
10. Hugh Ross, Reasons to Believe, *The Improbable Planet* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016)

