

## **Religious audiences and the topic of evolution: Lessons from the classroom. What advice do you have for scientists who may be uncertain or even hostile when they engage religious audiences on the topic of evolution?**

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- Wes McCoy: 00:26 Oh, sorry. Thank you. If you're a person who's engaging with the public, that's different from a person who stays in their laboratory and simply communicates by publishing papers. If you're engaging with the public, if you want to talk with people who are walking down the sidewalks or driving buses, or moving around in an airport or reading books in a library, if you want to talk to regular people, you have to start by saying, "I want to talk to people. I want to communicate to people and not everybody's like me. (00:59) So if you start from that point that there's a lot of diversity in the world, and you want to engage with that diversity, "I want to engage. I'm a Presbyterian. I love engaging with a man who lives down the street from me, who is Muslim. I love engaging with the people across the street who are Roman Catholic. I love talking to the man who I work with at school, who is actually a rabbi and a biotechnologist." So these kinds of conversations, if you start by saying, "I am a person who knows the truth and no one else does," you're doomed. The way to start is to say, "I want to communicate with people because I value people more than I value my topic."
- Briana Pobiner: 01:43 And I'll follow up on that and say, I think the next step is to say, "And I actually want to listen and listen respectfully." And so the Human Origins program in the last two years has had a traveling version of the Hall of Human Origins that has been going around to 19 public libraries across the country, and Rick and myself and Connie and Jim have gone to all of the libraries and put on public events, including a community conversation, as well as a private event and a tour and discussion with clergy members. (02:14) And I think simply the genuine listening with respect ... Even if nobody walks out of the room with a different feeling ... I should say, with a different understanding. I think people walk out of the room with

different feelings. And I think to have ... For people who had never met a scientist and had only heard that scientists walk in the room feeling better than everyone else. I think to try ... For scientists to try to model the behavior that we're actually really interested in what the public is thinking, and really want to listen genuinely. I think that's a really, really important step.

Jamie Jensen: 02:51 I just want to re-emphasize not approaching the topic from a deficit model, right? And that's often, in the past unfortunately what science has done with this topic in particular that we approach it with. Somehow, if you don't accept what I'm telling you that is the ultimate truth, that you are dumb. And I think that I ... At least my data shows that that's not the case at all. There are incredibly intelligent people who have other barriers. And so I think what Brianna said is addressing them, "So okay, tell me what you're thinking. And I'm not going to automatically assume that you're somehow in deficit."

Briana Pobiner: 03:25 And I think showing scientist data about that information deficit model and how it doesn't work would be really important.

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