

I don't have enough **FAITH**
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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

The Privileged Planet – Designed for Discovery with Dr. Jay Richards

(December 13, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the most fantastic arguments for a designer is something known as the fine-tuning of the universe. We've talked about it on this program before. In fact, even atheists like Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens said this is really the hardest argument to answer from an atheistic perspective. But there's actually another level to the fine-tuning argument that came out about 20 years ago in a phenomenal book called 'The Privileged Planet' by Guillermo Gonzalez and Dr. Jay Richards.

Both of these men are PhD's. Guillermo has his PhD in astronomy and Jay has his PhD in philosophy and theology from Princeton. And they've just released an update to a book called 'The Privileged Planet'. This is a phenomenal resource. It's also a DVD, by the way. It takes the fine-tuning argument to another level. We're going to talk about fine-tuning today, but we're going to talk about the hypothesis of 'The Privileged Planet' that you may not have heard about unless you've seen the book 'Privileged Planet'.

And one of our favorite guests on this program is Dr. Jay Richards. He's good at so much. You know, we've had him on for fine-tuning. We've had him on for his phenomenal book on economics that I think is one of the best books written, certainly from a Christian perspective on economics. And we've also had him on for 'The Price of Panic'. That book had to do with the COVID lockdowns. But the 20th anniversary of 'The Privileged Planet' has just come out and Jay is here with us to talk about it.

Here he is, ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Jay Richards, who now works, by the way, at the Heritage Foundation. Jay, you've been doing such great work at Heritage. We're going to talk about that in another podcast. But what caused you and Guillermo to come together and update 'The Privileged Planet' book?

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JAY:

Well, Frank, it's great to be with you again. And so, it's funny because believe it or not, Guillermo and I, when we were working on the book originally, so say 2002, we knew that in 2024 there was going to be a total eclipse of the sun that was going to traverse the United States. And the book we realized would come out in 2004. And eclipses play a major role in our book. They're kind of the lead character, if you will.

And we said, you know, we should do a 20th year anniversary edition in 2024, and we can update it. Because when the book came out in 2004, there were just, I think it was about 100 extrasolar planets that had been discovered. So, you know, planets around stars other than our sun. We're now around 5,000 extrasolar planet detections. And so, just a lot more data to bring to bear on the argument for our book.

And so, we had actually planned to do this and then we actually did it. And it was initially just going to be, okay, update the references, add a few new facts. But you know, Frank, it's funny because if you write a book when you're young and then you wait 20 years and you go back to it, you realize, gosh, I think I'm a better writer now, I could write this kind of more simply. And so, we ended up really going over all the pros. Didn't change or hide anything, but just, I think, made it simpler so that it's a more readable book and definitely now up to date for the 2024 reader.

FRANK:

Well, what is the hypothesis of the book, 'The Privileged Planet'?

JAY:

The hypothesis is that those rare places in the universe where observers like ourselves can exist. So, the rare habitable planets where complex life can exist are also the best places overall for doing science, for different kinds of scientific discoveries. So, in other words, you know, chemical embodied observers like ourselves, we find ourselves in the best places overall for doing science.

And that's the pattern. It's the weirdness between these very rare places where life can exist in the universe. We think they are very rare, are also the places you would want to be for doing

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everything from geology, and astronomy, and physics, and cosmology. And it's that pattern, that weird overlap that we think points to conspiracy rather than mere coincidence. In other words, it's evidence of purpose and design in the universe.

FRANK:

So, would it be fair to say that our Earth is in such a position? Not only does it allow life, but it allows us to observe the universe around us and discover fine-tuning and other aspects of our reality here that seem to point to a designer. Is that sort of...?

JAY:

Yeah, that's exactly it. And the argument's at a kind of general level. So, what we say is, okay, what are all the things you need to build a habitable planet? And both from our knowledge of Earth, but also from our knowledge of chemistry. So, we're not being narrow-minded when we say, well, Earth like conditions, but of course, life could be in lots of other places.

No, in fact, we know from chemistry that the places where any kind of chemical life can exist are going to be exceedingly rare. And so, Earth and Earth like planets, that those would be the places where life must exist, or it's not...

You know, it's only those places that are compatible with life, but they're also the best places for observing. So, in other words, if you were to compare Earth with other less life friendly planets or star systems, what you find is that those places are not just hostile to life. They're much less conducive to doing science of the various kinds that you need to do, because you need to kind of, you've got to create a set of tradeoffs for conditions.

So, you might say, okay, if you just wanted to see other galaxies, well, the best place to be would be between galaxies, right? So, you're not dealing with the light and dust from your own galaxy, but there'd be a huge number of things that you would not be able to discover there. And so, the best place, that's why I say the best place overall for doing science is going to be the place that meets all of the complex tradeoffs that are needed when you're going to try to find out, okay, yeah, I want to be able to see the cosmic background radiation, this relic echo from much earlier in the universe.

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I want to be able to see other stars, I want to be able to figure out the laws of gravity, want to find out what's happening in the recent past. You actually need Earth and sort of water cycle processes to do that. Add all those things up and it turns out the place where we find ourselves is really the best place for doing science.

FRANK:

What is an attribute or two of our planet that allows us to do science?

JAY:

Well, so one would just be the transparency of our atmosphere. So, we don't have any reason to expect ahead of time that the kind of atmosphere life needs, basically an oxygen and nitrogen rich atmosphere like we have, would also be transparent to the part of the electromagnetic spectrum that's really, really informative, which is the visible part of the spectrum.

And there's just this weird coincidence in some ways, it takes a long time even to explain. But the kinds of energy that life needs on the surface, you need an atmosphere that allows that in while blocking other kinds of energy. And it just so happens that this narrow little range of what we call light, it's this visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum, is also really the most informative part of the spectrum for being able to detect things. And so, we're on the surface of a planet with a thick atmosphere compared to say Mars or the Moon.

And yet, that atmosphere allows us to be able to detect lots of things in the rest of the universe, including even the background radiation from the surface of the planet. And then one other little detail is you might think, okay, but wouldn't it be better to have a totally dry atmosphere so that you're not dealing with clouds? It turns out, no.

What you want is a partly cloudy atmosphere that's clear but also gives you water vapor because water vapor actually produces rainbows which require very precise set of conditions which end up being really important for figuring certain things out in chemistry and physics.

And so, it's just the kind of examples like this, they sort of pile one on the other. And at the beginning we didn't know that it was, you know, we would be able to find so many examples.

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We thought, okay, gosh, maybe there's one or two of these. But eventually we're going to discover that no, it's much better if you're on the surface of Titan, which is one of Saturn's moons, for other kinds of science. But it has a terrible murky atmosphere. Now we found that example after example of the things life needs on a planet also set up the conditions for doing science and doing science better than if you were in these less life friendly places.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, we've got just a week or two prior to Christmas. And the book 'The Privileged Planet' is not only a very edifying book, but it's beautifully illustrated as well. So, this is a book you say, oh, it's a coffee table book. Yeah, but it's a coffee table book you will actually read and get something from it because the heavens declare the glory of God according to Psalm 19. And of course, Romans 1 says God's invisible qualities are clearly seen from what has been made so that we are without excuse.

We know there is a Creator out there, a designer out there, just from the world around us. Yes, God has written His Word, but He's also done works. And the works are the creation around us. And you can see it because we live in a privileged position. And that's what the book 'The Privileged Planet' gets into and a lot more. We're going to have a lot more with Dr. Jay Richards right after the break. Don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio Network. We're back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, our Earth is not only fine-tuned along with the entire universe, but our Earth is in a position with certain attributes that allow us to discover the truth around us. And that's the thesis of the 20th anniversary edition of 'Privileged Planet' by my guest today, Dr. Jay Richards. And also co-written with Dr. Guillermo Gonzalez.

Jay, before we get back into this, I've got to ask you something about Guillermo, because famously, about 20, maybe 25 years ago now, he actually got a lot of blowback for being a proponent of intelligent design. Can you give us a couple of minutes on what happened to Guillermo?

JAY:

Yeah, absolutely.

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FRANK:

A couple of decades ago.

JAY:

Yeah, it was. Really it was 20 years ago, and it was because of the book primarily. And so, the book came out in March of 2004. He was a professor in the Physics and Astronomy department at Iowa State University at the time. The book got a lot of attention. And then when the documentary came out, 'The Privileged Planet', there was a premiere of it at the Smithsonian, which is crazy. It created this kind of crazy media cycle in which the Washington Post had an editorial about it and the New York Times wrote about this thing.

And so, it put a lot of the spotlight on him. And as it happens, there was a religion professor, an atheist religion professor, of course, at Iowa State University that started a petition drive to get Guillermo denied tenure despite the fact that he was one of the best published members of the faculty, even as junior faculty member. And so, that succeeded. He taught at Grove City College for a while and then at Ball State. And this just kind of followed him around. I don't know how else to put it. It was one of these...

In some ways, being a scientist that advocated intelligent design was at the beginning of the 21st century, the thing that people got canceled for. Later, the stuff we think about people getting canceled for recently is quite different. It was actually, this was kind of the original heresy that could get you canceled, was basically not being a materialist or if you were a Christian or a theist in the science field, you had to have some way of compartmentalizing that so that you accepted whatever the kind of party line on in your discipline was.

And so, that's unfortunately, he suffered as a result of this book. Now, he did end up working for a while with friend in Huntsville, Alabama at NASA. And then he and his friend and a few others started a private company that does work on space satellites effectively. But he's in the private sector and so in a much safer environment. But I mean, honestly, as a philosopher, I could say other than people saying mean stuff about me on the internet, I didn't really suffer in the way that Guillermo has.

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And he really did. I mean, he took a serious hit. And it's funny because I still remember right before the book came out saying, do you think it's good that we have this book coming out, you know, before you've got tenure? And I remember him saying, well, I mean, God gave us the idea when it happened, and it doesn't seem like it would be right to squelch it. So yeah, he did a very brave thing, but he definitely had suffered for it.

FRANK:

Now friends, we said on this program many times before that science doesn't say anything, scientists do. And here's an example. We have an atheistic scientist, just through a philosophical presupposition, claiming that somehow a man who suggests there could be an intelligent designer out there is somehow outside the bounds of science, and he can't, he can't even practice science at a major university. Jay, why is this completely wrong headed? It's philosophically self-defeating to say that materialism is true, and I can know reality around me. Can you kind of unpack that for us?

JAY:

Absolutely, yeah. I mean, we all take for granted that we are intelligent agents. That is that we're not completely determined by the laws of physics and chemistry. Yes, we're embodied and so that conditions us in all sorts of ways. But we also think that we're able to know true things, we're able to discover things about the universe. We're able to evaluate mathematical equations or sentences to see if they're logical.

And so, all that presupposes that we are rational beings with minds and agency. And yet materialism can give no account of that. This is why if you're a committed materialist, you're almost certainly going to be a determinist, but you're really going to have to ultimately deny that agents exist. And so, that's why you get materialists like Alex Rosenstien at Duke who says, you know, the idea that our thoughts are about anything is an illusion. Well, an illusion implies that you have thoughts, right? That you can't have an illusion unless you're an agent.

And so, this is always the problem is that materialism ends up destroying itself. And so, the idea that science, or natural science, that is, the pursuit, kind of systematic pursuit for the truth about the natural world is somehow synonymous with materialism. It doesn't make sense. You need a view of the human person that accommodates the fact that there were rational agents

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that can make discoveries. And that was what all of the early founders of modern science believed.

In fact, lots and lots of them were explicitly Christian. They thought they were thinking God's thoughts after us. They thought God made us in His image and so we can discover the underlying laws that God has written into the universe.

That makes sense. That's a good metaphysical sort of setting for natural science to flourish. Unfortunately, in the 19th century, for ideological reasons, materialism got identified with science in the minds of many people. So that if you break with materialism on philosophical grounds, or you argue that materialism can't account for the natural world, you're violating this rule, it's a fake rule that got set up in the 19th century that science and scientism or science and materialism are one and the same thing. In fact, if you believe science is the pursuit of truth about the natural world, then it should be open to all the possibilities and just follow the evidence where it leads.

FRANK:

We're talking to Dr. Jay Richards. His brand-new updated 20th anniversary edition 'Privileged Planet' you need to get. He wrote it with Guillermo Gonzalez, and it is a beautifully done book. In addition to the content, it's just well-illustrated so you'll enjoy it. Let's talk a little bit about fine-tuning, Jay, because that's what this is related to.

First of all, what does it mean to say that the universe is fine-tuned?

JAY:

Fine-tuning refers to the fact that both initially all the kind of universal truths about the universe. So, the so-called cosmic constants, so say the gravitational force constant G , which is in the law of gravity that we say that it has a very specific value. And if the value were different, the universe compatible with life would be much more difficult or impossible.

So, the idea is you take up kind of the set of ingredients or think of it as the sort of dials for the different things you need. And so, it would be these constants that have to do with the big forces. The gravitational constant, of course it affects these kind of large scale things, we detect

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it. But there's also an electromagnetic force constant, so-called strong and weak nuclear force constant that are relevant at very small atomic size scales. And then the cosmological constant, which is really about the kind of rate of the expansion of the universe.

Fine-tuning is just the idea that these have to be very precisely tuned or set in their values in order to have a universe that's compatible with any kind of life. And then the second part of fine-tuning is the so-called initial condition. So, how would things have to have been set up right at the beginning in order to get a universe like the one that we have? So, think constants, think the initial conditions and we talk about that. And then in 'The Privileged Planet' but we mainly focus on the local conditions.

So, even when you get these universal properties tuned right in the universe as a whole, there's a lot of local possibilities for how planets can form. And so, you're going to need a lot of stuff to go right at the local level, that is at the planetary level, in order to get even a single location where life can exist.

So, that's the idea of fine-tuning is just literally, you know, in the literature they call it the fine-tuning problem because it's considered a problem that, gosh, the universe looks like it's fine-tuned. And if we're allowed to follow that reasoning, it might be that, well, maybe there was a fine-tuner. And so, that's why many people call it a problem. I don't think it's a problem. I just think it's a discovery.

FRANK:

Yeah. And some of these parameters are so extremely fine-tuned. The cosmological constant, one part in 10 to the 120th power. The gravitational constant, one part and 10 to the 40th power. How do you even get your head around those numbers, Jay?

JAY:

You can't really. Like in some ways the cosmological constant itself that, you know, it's kind of a complex idea, but it governs how quickly or slowly the universe expands or whether it continues to expand or collapses upon itself. It's so precise. Yeah, 1 in 10 to the 123rd. You know, there's really no way to process that. I mean, there may be a sort of 10 to the 80th elementary particles in the observable universe, and this is a lot larger number than that.

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And so, in some ways, you only need one of these examples to I think, trigger at least the, the suspicion that this is a major setup. But in fact, we've got quite a large number of these fine-tuning parameters that need to be set.

FRANK:

Just for our audience who may not be familiar with scientific notation, 10 to the 80 th is 10 times bigger than 10 to the 79 th.

JAY:

That's right.

FRANK:

You're adding a zero. So, Jay, when you just said the number of elementary particles, do you mean quarks or atoms?

JAY:

Yeah, the sort of protons, and neutrons, and electrons things.

FRANK:

Okay, so the estimate is there's 10 to the 80 of those in the entire universe.

JAY:

Yeah, roughly.

FRANK:

Okay. And the cosmological constant is far more fine-tuned than that number one part in 10 to the 123 rd power.

JAY:

That's right.

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FRANK:

I mean, you can't even comprehend it.

JAY:

Yeah. That's a one with 123 zeros after it. I mean, there's really no way to process it except that that's a really freaky big number, you know, a level of precision that, you know, we couldn't have imagined. The other thing is that it actually took until the mid-20th century for us to develop both the physical tools of discovery, but also the conceptual tools to even be able to do these calculations. So, if people think, well, it was much easier to be a Christian or a theist in the Middle Ages, all of this stuff that we're talking about was discovered in the 20th century. And it's only in the 20th century that we had strong empirical evidence that the universe had a beginning.

So, it hasn't always existed. And so, if anything, I think this is a much better time to be a theist and a Christian than at any other time, because we've got the created order testifying to the things that, speaking as a Christian, we believed all along, but we weren't able to sort of point to some evidence in the sky that shows that, you know what? The universe had a beginning in the past. It's not eternal.

FRANK:

You know, I heard one illustration for 1 in 10 to the 40th power, which is the gravitational force fine-tuning. And the illustration went like this. Take the entire North American continent from Central America to Greenland and stack it in dimes all the way to the moon, 238,000 miles. Then do that on a billion other North American continents. Then take all those huge piles of dimes, put them in one pile, mark one dime red, blindfold a friend.

After you mix that red dime in, ask him to pick one dime at random. The chance he would pick that one red dime is one chance and 10 to the 40th power. You've got to have a lot of blind faith to believe that he's going to pick that dime, Jay.

JAY:

He's not finding that red dime. [Laughter]

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FRANK:

Well, we've got a lot more with Dr. Jay Richards. Again, his 20th anniversary edition, along with Guillermo Gonzalez, 'The Privileged Planet' has just come out a couple of months ago. Makes a great gift around Christmas, and it will enhance your faith in a creator because it's an amazing argument. There are many levels to it. You've got to get the book to get into the details. We will talk a little bit more right after the break, so don't go anywhere. Back in two minutes.

Blessings this Christmas, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist here on the American Family Radio Network. By the way, for those of you that listen on the American Family Radio Network, this is one of two podcasts we do each week. The second podcast is a midweek podcast, comes out on Tuesday afternoon. You will not hear this on American Family Radio.

So, if you want to hear that midweek podcast, and I hope you do, wherever you go to podcasts, just find I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, and you can listen to both. We're going to have Jay back on here in a future show. He may be a midweek podcast, so you don't want to miss that. We have several other great shows coming up during the midweek, so check all that out. I want to get back to my guest, Dr. Jay Richards.

Again, he is the co-author of the book 'Privileged Planet', 20th anniversary edition just came out. Jay let's talk more specifics if we can, about how this planet here on Earth is privileged. Give us a few more parameters that help people realize how privileged we are to be where we are.

JAY:

Well, the most obvious one is that of course we're in the right location around our star in the so-called circumstellar habitable zone, which just means around the star. You can just think of it as the Goldilocks zone. And so, you know, you've got a star, it's got a lot of energy, a lot of heat. And so, if you want to have a planet that isn't just getting all the water boiled off of the surface or is it going to have the water freeze up, you need to be the right distance from your host star and you need your orbit to be nearly circular, so you're not sort of varying your distances wildly over the course of your year.

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Now, it's no surprise, of course, that the Earth is in the Goldilocks zone. But the question is, okay, how, how narrow is that zone? Because for a long time when we didn't know that much, I mean, even the 1930's, you know, lots of scientists thought there were maybe intelligent civilizations on Mars.

Now we know there's not. In fact, now we just look for evidence of past liquid water. But in some ways, the fact that we have Venus, which is the planet similar to Earth, it's just slightly closer to the sun and then Mars is slightly farther away. These are the two planets that are the most like Earth in our solar system, and yet they're utterly lifeless. Venus has this opaque atmosphere.

It's something like 900 degrees Fahrenheit on the surface and then you've got cold, dusty, dry Mars, no life. And so, that tells you just how sort of narrow the zone is around a star. Now by itself, all that tells you is, okay, well, so not every planet's going to be compatible with life. That's not really a design argument because of course you have a lot of stars and planetary systems. What's interesting though is that there's one other factor.

So, it's a little complex, but if you think about it, if you're in the Goldilocks zone around a star, that's going to set the size of your sun in your sky. Well, there's another thing that a life friendly planet needs. It needs a large, well-placed moon like we have to stabilize the planet's tilt on its axis, and it plays a key role in the tides which are important to life. All right? So, when you get that, that's going to set the size of your moon in your sky.

As it happens, when you get those two things in a habitable planet, the moon that's the right size and distance, a star that's the right size of distance, they appear to be the same size in your sky, so that they produce what we call perfect solar eclipses, where you get this perfect match between the disk of the moon and the bright photosphere of the sun, which many of your listeners I suspect, probably saw that total eclipse in this last April.

In other words, it's a perfect match between these totally different objects. Right? The Moon is 400 times closer than the sun, but it's also 400 times smaller than the sun. So, you get this

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weird match. So, my co-author, Guillermo Gonzalez, astronomers have known this for a long time and thought, well, it's a weird coincidence.

Guillermo did a study to say, okay, what would eclipses look like on other planets in our solar system? And so, he did this calculation, published it in a journal. It's how the book started showing that the one place in the solar system where there are observers is the one place where you get these perfect solar eclipses.

Now that's weird, but here's the final step is that perfect solar eclipses set up conditions. They're like a natural scientific experiment that allow us to discover things about the universe that would otherwise been very, very difficult to discover. So, just one example. Einstein's general theory of relativity proposed a kind of new understanding of gravity.

And so, he said what massive objects do is that they warp space time. So, one implication of this would be that if you say we're to look, measure Starlight as it passed near the edge of the sun on its way to the Earth. And you knew where the star was supposed to be because you'd mapped it at a different time when the sun wasn't there. It would look like that star had moved as a result of it being curved, that light being curved as it passes near the edge of the Sun.

And this would only happen in a really massive body like the Sun with the light sort of passing near it. But of course, you can't do that in a normal circumstance. You don't see starlight right near the edge of the Sun at noon on a normal day. The one time when you can do that is during the perfect solar eclipse.

And so, Einstein realized this. Arthur Eddington and another team in 1919 actually confirmed Einstein's general theory. And it's been confirmed in much better ways since then. But that's just one example of how this weird thing, this weird coincidence, these two ingredients needed to build a planet where life can exist, set up this experiment where we can do science in a way that would be very hard to do on other planets. So that's in some way, it's kind of the eeriest in one of the more complicated examples of this.

Let me give you one other example, Frank, that's much simpler within the galaxy. We're in the so-called Milky Way Galaxy. It's a flattened spiral of gas, and dust, and stars, and we are in

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what... Guillermo was one of the people that dubbed the term the galactic habitable zone. So, we're about the right distance.

We're not in the center of the galaxy, which is very dangerous for life. Not on the outer edge, which really doesn't have heavy elements, really planets. We're midway from the center to the edge between spiral arms. And that's where you'd want to be for life. Now you can ask yourself a separate question. If you could pick one place in the galaxy where you would want to be for doing science of all sorts of types, where would you want to be? You would want to be in the galactic habitable zone.

So once again, there's this perfect... There's weird overlap between the needs for life and the needs for science. That makes a lot of sense if the universe is designed for discovery. It's just a sort of a brute fact without explanation otherwise.

FRANK:

The universe designed for discovery. Ladies and gentlemen, we've talked on this program before that the purpose of life is to know God and to make Him known. Jesus talks about this in John chapter 17, verse 3, where He says now this is eternal life. That they, meaning us, because He's praying for us, may know you, God the Father and Jesus Christ, whom you've sent.

No, He doesn't just mean no intellectually, He means to know personally. But in order to know Him personally, it's helpful to know that He exists. And this is one way you can know it. Now, the more and more technologically advanced we get, the better we're able to see the handiwork of God, the fingerprint of God.

And this book, 'Privileged Planet', will help you see this in a much more profound way. So, you want to avail yourself of this book, 'Privileged Planet', especially around the holidays, ladies and gentlemen, the holy days. That's where that comes from, holidays. And Jay and his colleague, Dr. Guillermo Gonzalez have done a great service here. And Jay, it's interesting. This book came out March of 2024. Sorry, March of 2004. That's the same month I Don't have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist came out. I wish we had seen the book before.

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When we update it, we're going to put it in there because it is just a phenomenal work. And you and Guillermo have done some great work here. Before we move on to some of the atheistic explanations for this because they try and refute this. I want to talk about the vastness of the universe if we can, for a second, Jay. You know, there's a lot of talk about UFO's. It's even in Congress now. And you're up there in the D.C. area working with the Heritage Foundation.

People are thinking, well, there's life on other planets up there. There's, you know, maybe spaceships coming here, that kind of thing. I've heard estimates that range anywhere from the number of stars on in the universe are about equivalent to the number of grains of sand on all the beaches on all the Earth times either 10,000 or 100,000. I've seen them both.

JAY:

Yep.

FRANK:

What does that say about our planet, if anything? Is there life, in your opinion, in other places with that vast number of stars and therefore planets out there or not? What's your view on this?

JAY:

Well, I'll give the philosopher's answer. It depends. [Laughter] And so, it's funny because Guillermo and I spent a lot of time doing this calculation and we came up with about 10 to the 25, so, you know, 10 to the 25th power grains of sand on all the beaches of the Earth. And a common estimate of the number of stars is 10 to the 22. But of course, you know, these are all sort of rough estimates. So yeah, you know, in the vicinity, at least when you're dealing with these exponential scales. So, a lot of people will think, gosh, the universe is so big, so it's going to have so many stars with so many planets.

You've got to have life surely someplace else and not just here. But yeah, okay, so let's say it's 10 to the 25 star systems, all right? And let's assume all of those have some planets around them. Okay, that's a lot of opportunities for building an Earth like planet. But then you have to take account of all the things you need to go right. So, you need to be around the right kind of

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star. I haven't even mentioned these. But you've got to be in the right, of course, distance. You need the right kind of moon. You need the right kind of planetary neighbors within your system.

You need to be in the right kind of galaxy. You need to be in the right location in the galaxy. You need to be at the right time in cosmic history. There's just a bunch of stuff. And so, if every one of these has only a, you know, a small fraction of a chance of occurring, what you're doing is you're multiplying numbers that are less than 1 and so the outcome gets smaller.

It's how multiplication works. And so, it may be, let's say there's 10 to the 25 stars, but what if it takes 10 to the, you know, 28 sort of variables when you add up a bunch of these factors that have, say, only a 10% chance of occurring? So, you end up swamping the resources of the universe. Now, we don't know if that's the case because we don't have that level of precision. What we know is that Earth like planets are rare compared to all the alternatives.

That's why the 5,000 planets we found so far, not one comes anywhere near close to being Earth. Like it's not nearly as close to the Earth as say, Mars is. So, that tells you, okay, Earth like planets are going to be rare. We do not know if there's one or several. My view is God can do what he wants to do and let's sort of, let's look and see.

I think either answer is very interesting. God didn't have limited resources. So, it's not a question of Him wasting material. He could have made life in lots of places, or He could have made a big, amazing universe in which life exists in one place. And then the universe is this domain for us to discover, to read God's handiwork. And so, I think theologically either one of those things are possible. Materialists tend not to like the idea that life exists only here. But you know, you can be a materialist and just say, well yeah, okay, life is rare.

That just shows you that, yeah, it happened once as a fluke. So, the materialist isn't going to be argued out of his materialism whether life is common or rare. I think we can afford to be open to the question. Now, it'd be super easy. If there are aliens, is there life elsewhere that's intelligent and technological, that is easy to confirm if they show up on a ship, right, that we can all see, not just these rumors. But otherwise, we're trying to find radio signals and things like that. And at least at the moment, we know life exists in one place. And we're that.

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FRANK:

How do atheists respond to the fine-tuning argument, the privileged planet argument? We're going to cover that in our final segment with Dr. Jay Richards. You're not going to want to miss it. So, don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere. Ladies and gentlemen, before we get back to my guest, Dr. Jay Richards, we're talking about 'Privileged Planet'.

I do want to give you a quick update on our Kingdom AI Project. As you know, we've got a proprietary AI program that we're using to translate our best stuff into right now about 13 different languages. So far, we have actually subtitled or overdubbed 3,376 videos and 1,229 articles into other languages. We're establishing websites in 13 languages including Arabic, Russian, Ukrainian, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and several on the African continent because we want to reach the world with apologetic material for Christ and your donations help us do that.

So, as you're considering your year-end donations, please consider ErossExamined.org. We're 100% virtual, so 100% of your donations go to ministry, 0% to buildings. And of course, we're still doing all the work here in the U.S. going to college campuses. In fact, we've got several campuses coming up in the spring. University of Nebraska, Ohio State, William and Mary, Mississippi State, several others. So, the money that you provide to us is going to reach young people on college campuses, and then through social media, and then people all over the world through our Kingdom AI Project.

I'll give you more of an update coming up in here in the future. But I want to get back to my guest, Dr. Jay Richards, because his phenomenal new updated book 'Privileged Planet' is out. And we've been talking about fine-tuning and how the universe, and particularly our planet seems to be designed so we can discover these scientific truths about reality. But Jay, we've got to talk a little bit here about the objections that atheists will bring up to this. How do they respond to, first of all, fine-tuning and secondly, the notion that we're in a privileged position?

JAY:

Well, the responses tend to be the same. And as you know, Frank, we decided when we wrote the book to go ahead and respond to objections. And there's a whole chapter on that called the

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'Skeptical Rejoinder'. Just because we were familiar with other objections and could anticipate it. So far, no one has come up with another objection that we hadn't anticipated. But it's only been 20 years. But probably the most popular one would be to describe it simply a selection effect argument. So, the idea of say the cosmic fine-tuning is, well, of course we find ourselves in a universe that's fine-tuned for existence because if it weren't, we wouldn't be able to see it.

And so, there's no surprise there. Okay, so there's a weird kind of subtle fallacy happening here and it's confusing a necessary condition for observing something with an explanation for why that situation exists. Those are two different things. No one is trying to explain, why do we see a universe compatible with our existence? Obviously, the universe is compatible with our existence. The question is, if the universe could be lots of different ways. So, there's no reason to think the gravitational force constant had to be what it was.

Why is it that the universe that exists matches all those? Because you'd expect the number of universes sort of abstractly hostile to life is much more likely than that you're going to have one that meets all these conditions. And so, by itself that doesn't get you anywhere. And so, then the, you know, sort of skeptical respondent will say, okay, but maybe there's just vast numbers of universes, so-called multiverse, and they all have these different properties. And so, as a result in one of those or a few, they'll be compatible with life.

And so that's, in that, you know, life will evolve because apparently that's really simple and look around at some point and say, well, gosh, the universe looks really well designed for us. But of course, it's not. That's a selection effect because there's a much larger set, okay? Problems there is one that the postulating unobservable universes to explain away what is otherwise clear evidence for design. And if you did that normally, it would destroy your ability to reason.

So, if a detective goes into a, you know, gets call. He goes into an apartment and a woman is dead in the kitchen with a knife in her back and her husband has fled to Cancun with a brand new life insurance policy out on her, he could say, well, you know, this looks like murder. It looks like there was intention here. Or you could say, well, there may be vastly many universes, and in some universes, knives just sort of spontaneously appear.

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And so, maybe that's the explanation. I mean, that's what you're dealing with. That's a crazy way of reasoning where you're just basically coming up with a scenario, postulating it to avoid what's otherwise obvious. Now, there is sort of another way of illustrating this, and this is what people would often say about our local fine-tuning. Well, of course we're in a planetary system compatible with our existence because we couldn't be here otherwise.

Because there's lots of other planets that can exist. Now, in that case, it's true, right? I think it's illicit intellectually to just postulate other universes you can't observe. On the other hand, we know there are other planets and stars, right? And so, we have to take account of that in our argument. And so, that's why Guillermo and I've never felt like you could get straight from saying Earth like planets are rare to design because you could just say, look, maybe we are the winners of this cosmic lottery of stars and planets.

But that's not our argument. Our argument is that yes, Earth like planets are rare, but those same places also provide the best settings for scientific discovery. It's that pattern that makes a lot of sense. It's exactly what you'd expect if the universe were fine-tuned for discovery and not just for life. It's really... It makes no sense otherwise. And notice that the discoverability part of these things, it's not required for our existence. So, of course we have to be on a planet with liquid water because of the sort of chemical composition of our bodies.

We didn't have to be able to see other galaxies from the surface, right? We didn't have to be able to figure out the laws of gravity from observing the planets in our sky. Ancient man, right? They didn't provide a survival advantage to be able to do these things. These are things that in some ways are gratuitous. They're given to us because the way the universe is set up. But you don't have a kind of same selection effect argument that you have if you're just talking about life.

FRANK:

I've heard also a puddle analogy. Can you explain that and respond to it?

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JAY:

Absolutely. Yeah, and so the idea is, or let me give you the example we come up with in privileged planets like the puddle analogy. So, imagine that you're a dandelion and you don't know anything about how dandelions are produced and you're conscious, all right?

And you discover that you're growing in a tiny little crack where there's some dirt available, but you're surrounded in every direction by a massive parking lot where no dandelions can exist. You might think, well, I'm tempted to think, oh, gosh, you know, somebody must have planted me right here in this crack because I couldn't exist everywhere.

But you say, yeah, but you see, if you know how dandelions are dispersed, their seeds get spread everywhere, some are bound to land in these cracks. That's the idea of the kind of selection effect that people appeal to. But of course, in the case of universes, we really just have one to deal with. And so, the thing we're trying to explain isn't why do we observe a fine-tuned universe, but why, of all the universes that could exist, does a fine-tuned universe exist? And it's the same thing in the kind of local setting.

My favorite analogy for why this is a kind of logical fallacy is the firing squad analogy, which I think goes all the way back to John Leslie. And so, the idea is, imagine you're an allied troop and you're captured during World War II by some SS and the SS are going to execute you promptly. He gets 20 of the best sharpshooters, lines you up, puts a blindfold on you. They're all 10ft away and they fire, and the bullets all miss and make a perfect outline around your body. And then you take the blindfold off.

Now, what are you going to do? You're going to say, well, I shouldn't be surprised to see this because if they'd shot me, I wouldn't be here to observe it. Now, that's insane. What you want to know is why did they miss? And it's much more likely that they missed intentionally. And that's, it's exactly the same thing with the universe. It's not that we should be surprised to see a universe compatible with our existence. It's that a universe fine-tuned for life should be the one that exists when the alternatives are so, so vast and numerous.

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FRANK:

Paul Davies, who's agnostic, but he's an astronomer at Arizona State University, calls the multiverse a dodge. You know, why do you think he would say something like that? He's not a believer, ladies and gentlemen, but he said the whole thing is a dodge. You're coming up with these wild sort of Doctor Strange theories to explain away what's right before your eyes.

JAY:

That's right. And I think the reason is because it's an obvious dodge, is because if you use that kind of reasoning in any other domain, people would think, well, you're insane. Like my example of the detective saying, well, let's not assume murder because maybe there's a billion universes and one universe, you'll get knives spontaneously ending up in women's backs, right?

If a type of reasoning that you're using in a scientific context would be completely absurd in every other context, that can usually tell you that, okay, somebody's doing something that's a dodge. They're trying to avoid the obvious implication or conclusion of the evidence. And the fine-tuning from the beginning in the 50's when Brandon Carter and people first started talking about fine-tuning, that's the term they used, right? That things look like they're very precisely tuned.

And this is why a number of unbelieving scientists like Fred Hoyle confess, yeah, common sense interpretation of the evidence looks like, you know, someone has been monkeying with physics. And so, the natural conclusion is that, yeah, that's a reasonable conclusion. And if you have lots of these types of evidence all converging in that same direction, then it's perfectly rational and reasonable to conclude that. The only reason not to is because you've set up a fake rule that prevents you from being able to consider the evidence for that conclusion.

FRANK:

Jay, other than getting the book 'Privileged Planet', where else can they go to find out more about the book, and you, and the work you're doing?

JAY:

We actually have a dedicated website, privilegedplanet.com which answers a lot of questions about the book. It links to the documentary which was produced way back in 2004 and is

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available. We're eventually going to have a chatbot on the site so that people can just ask questions, and it'll give you an answer summarized from the book. And then if you want to follow me in terms of my minute to minute opinions, they can follow me on X, formerly known as Twitter at Doctor Jay Richards. And full disclosure, it's about all sorts of different things.

FRANK:

Yeah. Because Jay, right now you're working with Heritage Foundation, and you were sort of leading the charge on sane state policy when it comes to trans gendering children.

JAY:

Yes.

FRANK:

And we talked about that about a year ago but give us just 20 seconds on that.

JAY:

Absolutely. I mean, I think we're winning. I mean, there's a Supreme Court case to be heard in December on the Tennessee law, which I'm very optimistic about. Half the US States have passed laws in the last couple of years prohibiting these crazy gender quackery, and surgery, and drugs on kids. International opinion is turning against this. I think we're going to win this, but it's going to be a long, hard slot.

FRANK:

Well, thanks for your work on it, Jay. We're going to have you back shortly to talk about that and a lot more. Ladies and gentlemen, Jay Richards, Dr. Jay Richards. Get the book 'Privileged Planet'. Go to privilegedplanet.com and give people the gift of evidence this Christmas season, ladies and gentlemen. Ladies and gentlemen, check out 'Privilege Planet'. God bless you. See you next week, Lord willing.

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