

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Read, watch or listen to David Rives, and you'll find that his passion for God's creation flows through everything he does. This author, speaker, researcher and TV host believes our Creator "left a pattern of His fingerprints across each corner of the universe, In every crevice on earth and imprinted in each cell of our bodies," according to his website, .

Rives has spent his life fulfilling what he says is his No. 1 goal: "To inspire and educate people that they are more than accidents, that they are fearfully and wonderfully made," he says. "We are made in the image of a loving God who cares about us. He cares so much about us that He came down to earth to save us from our sins and make us a part of His family for eternity. ... Science is showing design. History is showing that the Bible is true. Everything we see around us confirms there is a Creator, He cares about you, and you are no accident."

Rives fulfills his primary goal in several ways. His weekly show on TBN, Creation in the 21st Century, airs to millions around the world. He also writes weekly news columns on science and the Bible and has written the books Wonders Without Number and 21 Verses Backed by Science. He spoke with Charisma about how the Holy Spirit grew this passion for creation within him and the many ways he seeks to share the truth about God's creation work with others.

'The Heavens Declare the Glory of God'

Rives says his interest in creation science began in his teens when "I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life." He loved history and soon discovered he enjoyed astronomy as well. His growing curiosity moved him into connecting cameras to the back of telescopes to obtain pictures of space, a field

known as astrophotography.

“So here I am; I’m about 17 years old, and I’m taking these primitive pictures of galaxies and nebula and planets and things like that, just a hobby,” Rives says. “But the telescopes got better. And the technology got better. And photography with digital cameras was just beginning around this time. And before long, I took this picture of the great Orion Nebula, and many people might be able to spot Orion in the night sky. It’s the belt and the sword that most people pick out first.

“Well, if you go in between two of the three stars of the sword, there is a tiny, tiny speck; you can’t see it with your naked eye,” he says. “And it’s a nebula. ‘Nebula’ is Latin for ‘cloud.’ So it’s basically a cloud of gases floating around in space.”

Rives says he locked onto the nebula with his telescope. By this time, he had installed motorized mounts and computer software on his telescope, which allowed it to track and perform long-exposure photography. He captured a photograph of the “tiny cloud floating in space called the great Orion Nebula,” he says.

Rives had seen similar pictures, such as those taken by the Hubble Space Telescope, and says he always wondered if they were doctored somehow. “It looks too good to be true; it’s too beautiful,” he says. “And when I took the picture for myself, I sat there, and my jaw hit the floor. It was just as colorful, just as big, just as beautiful as all of these pictures I’ve seen in space magazines for years.

The photo immediately drew Rives’ heart to Scripture, he says. “It reminded me of a verse in Psalm 19. Verse one says that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork. It says, ‘day unto day uttereth speech, and night after night shows knowledge.’ But then it says, ‘There’s

no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.'

"So what is the Bible telling us there?" he asks. " Well, King David is writing in the Psalms that the heavens are shouting out the glory of a grand designer. They're shouting out, 'You are no cosmic accident.' They're shouting out, 'You're not star stuff, the result of time and chance.' They're shouting out, 'There is an awesome designer who cares about you, who wants you to be a part of His family.'

Rives says when he connected that verse to his nebula photograph, he first began thinking of explaining the Bible-science conjunction as a ministry rather than a hobby. When he was 18, he and his brother formed a nonprofit ministry, and he began speaking, first in local churches and at community events. Before long, the ministry extended past his native Tennessee and, he says, "took me all around the world with a very, very simple statement: 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' Everything is pointing to God's fingerprints, His design patterns that He's left throughout the universe."

'God Created the Heavens and the Earth'

It seems only natural that Rives' first book would focus on astronomy. But before long, he recognized an amazing truth: Scattered throughout Scripture are verses that display not only prophetic and gospel accuracy but historical and scientific accuracy as well.

Rives says he began contemplating this as he was writing his second book. His thoughts went like this: "If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, as it claims to be, and it was inspired by the Father Himself, then the Bible should know best," he says. "There's an amazing phrase that has become an iconic part of pop culture: 'Father knows best.' And it's kind of held over all of us at some point. ... but our heavenly Father knows absolutely the best. And He's written it down in the inspired Word of God, what we call the Bible.

"All right, so the Father knows best," Rives reiterates. "And so by implication, the Bible knows best."

Rives offers Genesis 1:1 as an example: "God created the heavens and the earth." He says in what seems like a simple start to the first book of the Bible, Genesis tells us, "God created everything."

"But wait; it's so much more than that," Rives says. "Because when you break down that verse, 'in the beginning,' well, that's the origin of time itself. God's outside of time; He doesn't need it. He created time for us to live in. So when that verse says, 'In the beginning,' that's God creating time itself."

"We'll go on," Rives says. "What does it say? 'In the beginning, God created the heavens.' Well, that's space. And the earth? Well, that's matter. So you've got the origin of time, space and matter in the very first verse of the Bible."

Rives adds, "The most common atheistic theory in cosmology today is known as the Big Bang theory, which states that the whole universe just happened by chance 14 billion years ago. That atheistic theory attempts to explain where time and space might have come from. But it does nothing to tackle where the matter came from, where all of the elements of the entire universe came from."

Rives delves further into his knowledge of physics as he continues. "The universe is made up of matter," he says. "It's all of these elements and these components, and then you have all of the space surrounding the matter. Well, the first law of thermodynamics states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. Einstein came along, and he said, 'Well, matter is just an expression of energy. Therefore, matter can neither be created nor destroyed. It just changes shape.'

"All right," he says. "So now let's think about what Einstein said here. It is a law of the universe that matter can't be

created or destroyed through any natural means. Well, where did all of the matter in the universe come from? There's only one explanation to that, and it's a supernatural origin of the matter—in other words, in the beginning, God created it. And that's found in the first verse of the Bible.

“So when you realize the three basic components of the entire universe are found in the first verse of the Bible—time, space and matter—then you realize, ‘Oh my goodness. The Bible really does know best,” Rives says. “God knew everything. And He put it down in His Word for us to read.”

‘Look Now at the Behemoth’

As a part of his creation science study, Rives has done extensive field work leading expeditions to dig up dinosaur bones and fossil remains. “But if [dinosaurs] are real, preserved in the fossil record, then a lot of people will say, ‘Why doesn't the Bible mention that?’

Rives, of course, has a scientific, biblical answer: “If the Bible knows best and is inspired by God, well then, He certainly knew about these creatures. Why didn't He say anything about them? In reality, the Bible actually mentions creatures that are probably dinosaurs many times.

“Here's what we need to know,” Rives says. “When our English Bibles, all of the English translations, were developed, the word ‘dinosaur’ didn't exist. So when our original English Bibles were written, which is what all the modern English translations are taken from, they use the word ‘dragon.’ It wasn't until the 1800s that the word ‘dinosaur’ came about,” he says, adding that even then, the two words were used interchangeably.

And so, Rives says, “Dinosaurs are just large creatures that are somewhat similar to some of the lizards that we have today. Now, they were very unique in that they were magnificently large. Some of them were over 100 feet long. But

now we know the Bible used the word 'dragon' to talk about dinosaurs.

"Where else could we find these creatures in the Bible?" he asks. "Well, there are several occurrences of the word. ... You find this behemoth mentioned in the book of Job. And Job is arguably one of the oldest books of the Bible. So what does God tell Job?

"Job was going through an extraordinary, very difficult time in his life," Rives says. "And God thought it important to remind him, 'Hey, look, there's someone bigger in control; you're in My hands. You're protected as long as you stay with Me.' And so God started mentioning all of these things. ... He said, 'Job, do you remember this creature called behemoth? You know, I made him with mankind, and this creature, behemoth, he eats grass. He has a lot of strength in his belly, and he moves his tail like a cedar tree.'

"And of course, I'm paraphrasing here, but all of that can be found in the book of Job," Rives says. He adds that many Bible commentators from the 1700s and 1800s thought the behemoth might be an elephant, another giant, strong creature.

But Rives says there's at least one problem with that theory. "The key is looking at that phrase, 'he moves his tail like a cedar tree.' So elephants have a kind of like a flyswatter tail. They don't have much tail. But these giant long-necked dinosaurs that are being found in Argentina and so many places around the world have a long tail, sometimes upwards of 40 feet in length."

Rives points to the discovery of the fossil remains of *Dreadnoughtus*, a Titanosaurian sauropod, which he describes as "a long-necked, giant dinosaur over 100 feet long, and it matches the description of behemoth in the Bible." He says that up until this discovery a few years ago, people said there was no creature alive with a tail that swings like a

cedar tree. But “just because we don’t see something that the Bible says doesn’t mean that it didn’t exist in the past,” Rives says. “The Bible always knows best.”

Rives has a similar scientific explanation for the biblical leviathan. “The Bible says there are giant dragons in the sea; there are giant serpents in the sea, so fierce that none dare stir them up,” he continues. “Well, if they’re so big, why haven’t we found them?” He says he leads an annual paleontological dig in Kansas, where they have in fact found what he calls “giant sea dragons” well over 50 feet long, “giant creatures just like the Bible describes, probably in the same family as Leviathan.”

As far as the extinction of these giant creatures, Rives says the fossil record also shows evidence that they were buried during the early stages of the great flood recorded in Genesis.

‘God So Loved the World’

“Everywhere we look in science—whether it’s in astronomy or paleontology or biology, the human body or animals—everywhere we look, we see these fingerprints, these design patterns that could not have happened by chance,” Rives says. “They had to have a Creator, they had to have a designer. And I believe that designer is the God of the Bible.

“We’ve talked about all this science, but the science means nothing unless I point it back to Christ,” Rives says. “We live in a grand universe, too large to fathom. There’s no way we could even comprehend the size and the grandeur of this cosmos. And yet we live on this tiny little planet called Earth. It’s like a speck floating in space compared to everything else. And it has so many design features. It’s the correct distance from the sun for heat. It is a terrestrial planet, which means that we have land to stand on. It has an abundance of water in the liquid form, which is absolutely

essential for life. It has a geomagnetic field, which enables our compasses and our GPSes to work, but it also protects us from harmful radiation from the sun. And we could go on for an hour on the features of the earth that makes it special for life.

“And yet, that’s not what makes it so special,” Rives says. “What makes it so special is that God cared enough about us on this tiny speck that He reduced Himself to flesh, that He came in the form of man to this planet, to live, to die, to be raised again, to save us from our sins, to offer us eternal life with Him. Think about how much He cares for us.

“When we’ve got 22 veteran suicides happening every single day, when we have teen suicide on the rise, when we have school shootings and all of these atrocities going on, when we’re in the midst of a global pandemic crisis that has rocked to the very foundations of not only our country, but the world, we need to remember that God cares about us,” he adds. “We’re not cosmic debris; we’re special. We’re created in His image; we are wonderfully made no matter who we are. And He loves us so much, and he wants us to be with Him for eternity. And that’s what it’s really all about.”

Marti Pieper is a freelance writer and editor.