

How Ken Ham's mind hasn't changed

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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That Ken Ham guy is pretty slick with words. This was clear before his evolution v. creation debate with Bill Nye last night, including in [his preamble at CNN](#). Early on we get this:

While we are not in favor of mandating that creation be taught in public school science classes, we believe that, at the very least, instructors should have the academic freedom to bring up the problems with evolution.

If you're just joining us in this long-running cultural debate, that might not sound too unreasonable. But soon, this:

Most students are presented only with the evolutionary belief system in their schools, and they are censored from hearing challenges to it. Let our young people understand science correctly and hear both sides of the origins issue and then evaluate them.

"Censored from hearing challenges to it" that most science teachers aren't at all interested in making? We're a long ways from Ham's earlier appeal to academic freedom. And that "both sides" bit implies that evolution and creation should be considered on equal footing, an argument the courts have long since rejected.

Ham sounded pretty good at the debate itself, too. But the substance again left a lot to be desired. This image has been making the rounds:

## Question: What, if anything, would ever change your mind?

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Well, the answer to that question is, I'm a Christian,

and as a Christian, I can't prove it to you, but God has definitely shown me very clearly through his word, and he has shown himself in the person of Jesus Christ, that the bible is the word of God.

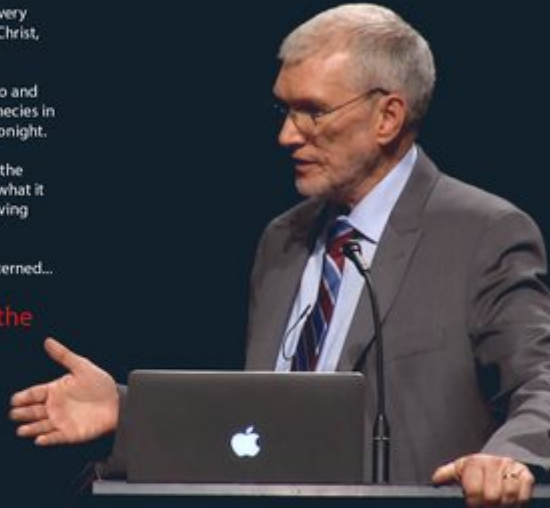
I admit that that is where I start from I can challenge people that you can go and test that, you can make predictions based on that, you can check the prophecies in the bible, you can check the statements in Genesis. I did a little bit of that tonight.

I can't ultimately prove that to you, all I can do is to say to someone look, if the bible really is what it claims to be, if it really is the word of God, (and that's what it claims), then, check it out, and the bible says that if you come to god believing that he is, he will reveal himself to you and you will know.

As Christians we can say we know, and so, as far as the word of God is concerned...

No, no one is ever going to convince me that the word of god is not true. ”

- Ken Ham



“

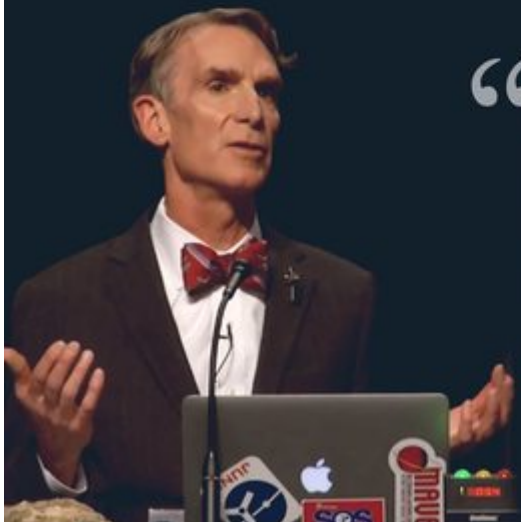
We would need just one piece of evidence.

We would need the fossil that swam from one layer to another, we would need evidence that the universe is not expanding, we would need evidence that the stars appear to be far away but are not.

We would need evidence that rock layers could somehow form in just 4000 years as opposed to just the extraordinary amount, we would need evidence that somehow you can reset atomic clocks and keep neutrons from becoming protons.

Bring on any of those things and you would change me immediately. ”

- Bill Nye



Evidence could change Nye's mind. *Nothing* could change Ham's.

For those of us who have no beef with evolutionary science, this crystalizes the difference between the two positions: only one debater is even theoretically open to revising his views in the future. So what's the point of a debate? (Lots of non-creationists didn't think there was a point, actually.) It's evidence that Ham isn't really interested in scientific inquiry here, only in what he already believes.

But it's more than that. Ham's answer also presents a discouraging view of what it means to be a Christian and to read the Bible. No one is ever going to convince him to understand the Bible differently than he does now? (I know those aren't his words, but that's the implication of how he shuts down the question so entirely.) Not new information about the Bible or the world, or new experiences or relationships, or even new revelation from Ham's relationship with the living God?

In my relatively short life as a Christian, I've changed my mind about lots of things, repeatedly—including what exactly we mean when we say the Bible is true. Lots of Christians have done this, of course (and not just liberal ones). The *Century* publishes a [whole series of articles](#) about how and why. It's part of the joy—and the responsibility—of a living personal faith.

Most scientists think Ham's approach is no way to do science. I've got little to add to that; I'm not a scientist. But I am a Christian, and I find it downright depressing to imagine a life of faith so utterly resistant to change.