

X files

by John VanSloten
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[Opening clip segment]... [low lighting, JVS w/flashlight] Welcome... Today were going to start our Spiritual Investigation by looking at the popular television series, The X Files. While I'm not an 'X-Phile' in the addicted sense of the word, I have had occasion to watch the program once in a while. This week I watched the movie for the first time. It was filled with standard X File fare... Unsolved mysteries... Aliens visiting our planet (they came in 35,000 BC!)... Government conspiracies to cover up their existence... dark alleys.... flashlight scenes... and at the end of the film, just when you think you've found some answers to the mystery, there is a twist.... and pffff!... your answer vanishes right before your eyes and you're left with just as many questions as you came with! The mystery remains... At least until next week! The producer of the program, Chris Carter, says that's the way he like to write his episodes... always leaving people with more questions... PAUSE...

You know what?....I think that its the search for answers... answers to some big questions in life, is what's attracting people to the show. Sure its good entertainment... but for many, the show may also be addressing some very deep, and profound questions as well. More on that later....

I want to start by giving you a brief description of what the show is all about. The X files are secret FBI files that deal with unexplained phenomena. They're cases that most agents would leave alone except for agent Mulder [Picture of Mulder if we have it Dan and then have the next three points describing him pop up on the screen beside his picture]. Fox Mulder is an FBI agent who really wants to believe that there is something out there. A poster in his office says, "I want to believe." In the show he is always the one who believes first and asks questions later. His partner is a woman named Dana Scully [picture of Scully Dan....same format] . Unlike Mulder she's the one who asks questions first. Especially early on in the series she shows herself as quite a skeptic. She only believes in what she sees. Producer Chris Carter sets the tone for their relationship, way back, in the very first episode of the series. SET UP... **RUN CLIP #2 PILOT 16:20-17:30** [end on "That's why they put the I in FBI"] And so the series begins... Mulder putting his faith in some mysterious alien truth.... and Scully putting hers in Science... Every episode goes on to operate on the continuum between Fox Mulders's faith and Dana Scully's skepticism... Its really a program that's all about faith vs science. The phenomenological vs the facts... The mysterious vs. The known... < This is the primary tension that's built into the series.

Now its important to understand that the program does have a very strong bias in terms of where is stands on this continuum. Obviously, Chris Carter wants us to believe that the paranormal is real, that the mysteries are not imagined... that aliens are here!.... In his second episode in the series, he makes this point very clear... [Let me set this clip up a bit... Mulder has just witnessed real aliens at a secret army base... because he did, they erased his memory... But then before the episode ends, he meets a mysterious government operative... who tells him the real truth....**RUN CLIP #3 DEEP THROAT**

1:41:10 - 42:38... "They been around for a long, long time..." The show's creator wants us to believe that there really is something out there... We just need to search it out.... We just need to believe! In many early episodes that **something** directly related to aliens... in others it has to do with psychic powers... in others universal energy fields... in the last two I saw... The mystery centred around the reality of personal evil forces.... one was about Satan himself taking on the form of a church pastor (LONG PAUSE..... Sinister smile... Wouldn't it be a drag if you discovered that I... I hate it when that happens!) Bottom line in the show is that **there is something out there!**

Fox Mulder knows it... And he has the faith to search it out... He has to!... You see, his sister was abducted by aliens when he was 12 years old... The memories have fuelled his faith... And energized his efforts to find the truth. A closing scene from another early episode captures his grief over his lost sister....it also captures his deep desire to want to believe in something more..... In this scene Scully is reviewing a tape of an interview that was taken when Mulder was under hypnosis. In it Mulder speaks of his experience when his sister was taken away..... RUN CLIP #4 CONDUIT 51:00- 52:48 [end at 'I want to believe'].... "I want to believe.... I want to believe..." Mulder knows that there is something more and he knows that he needs it and he knows that there's got to be more and that he needs to believe!

Creator Chris Carter says this about the main premise behind his show.... "We all want to be driving through the desert at night and see something in the sky that we can't explain....its tantamount to a religious experience and I think that's what Mulder is all about." Chris Carter, Producer Hear this guy? He's written the show to connect with people's desires for a religious experience! The questions that he is getting at in the program are fundamentally spiritual questions! The itch that he's attempting to scratch rests deep within the human soul! And I would guess, within his human soul. So in this way... Fox Mulder's search is the same as all of our searches... we all want to believe in something more, don't we? We all want to believe that there's more than these meagre 40, 50, 60, 70 years! More than the frustration, pain and hopelessness we face. This can't be all there is, can it? There must be a greater source of meaning, of hope. There must be more!

For many of us we've already discovered the futility of the 'isms' We've discovered that materialism doesn't work. We'll never have enough stuff to satisfy our souls.... neither does pragmatism, believing that **you are what you do** gets you nowhere... We want to be human beings, not human doings! hedonism is another ism that doesn't work. We never get there in the pursuit of selfish pleasure... humanism doesn't work. For all the progress we've made in humanity, through science, through technology; wars, violence and moral decay remain! And now, entering into a new millennium, many are pursuing a new age kind of spiritualism ... the answer is found deep within yourself... Its found in your next life... Its found in universal energy fields... In psychic powers... It can even be found at the holy shrine of extraterrestrial life... out there... somewhere... **PAUSE...** And I'm afraid that some day... some year... some decade... we'll be able to look back at this time and see the futility of this 'ism' as well.

So where do we find the answers then?... Because the questions still remain! Where do we get some understanding? [**BIBLE in HAND...**] Another Creator and Producer wrote a story that offers a few answers to our questions... If we go back to the pilot episode of his series, the Genesis of his story... we'll discover some important truths about our humanity and our place in the universe. And its only as

we come to discover these important truths that we can begin to find the answers.

In Chapter 1 of the Genesis episode, verse 27 we read... "So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27 Understanding this verse is foundational to our finding the answers to the big questions of life. Two big points we need to grasp.

First, "...God created people..." We didn't just show up.... happen to be here one day... we were created! (Now there is some debate on how exactly God did this creative act.... we'll cover that another day... but foundational to finding the answers is the fact that you were created by God!) There is a God who has the power to create... There is a first cause that breathed reality into existence. All of creation does indeed have a creator! This is the first foundational understanding we need.

The second, is that we are created in a **certain way**! Every single human being is created in this certain way. All of us share this certain way in common. And what is that commonality? We are all created in the "...image of God..." **REREAD VERSE** But what does being created in the image of God mean. Historically the church has had several positions on this matter. These include diverse emphases ranging from a physical resemblance, to an ability to reason and know, to an ability to exercise dominion, an ability to be free to choose and lastly and an ability to be in relationship . [Dan, put all five of these on the screen as I mention them and then fade out the first four and blow up the last(larger size)] I think that there is a bit of all of these in the meaning of the term but its this last point that I'd like to focus on for a few minutes this morning. Being created in the image of God means being created with an ability to be in relationship. To be human is to live freely and gladly in relationship, first with God and then with others around us!

The first question of the Presbyterian Catechism sums it up well when it poses both the question and the answer.... [Millionaire format... file attached Dan) What is the chief purpose of humanity? Do you know the answer? Important question... if answer incorrectly you leave with nothing... Is it

- a) To finish life with the most toys!
- b) To have the most fun possible!
- c) To stay healthy and love others!
- d) To know God and to enjoy him forever!

What's your pick?... Remember you're now out of life lines... Is that your final answer? The answer is d!
(Light up)

When you were created in the image of God you were created with a capacity to know him and enjoy him. If we're not doing that...if we don't know him then the desires that are inherent in each of us are not being met! We were made to know God, to be in a relationship with him....., with all of our being we

were made that way! The restlessness and questioning we feel are made to be there... and they're made to create a yearning for him. One OT poet wrote, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" Psalm 42:2 The thirst, the questions, the searching for answers is built into us! God made us to know him, and until we know him we know nothing! The truth is out there, and its a person, the person of God himself, a God who made to find all your answers in him! In living in relationship with him.

Until we find this, the search will continue. Until we find him, we will remain lost and full of nagging questions. Until we find him, we will not find meaning... Not in its ultimate Form! PAUSE...

And once we find him? What happens then? When we find God? What will that mean for our lives? I think its more than words can express! Its really out of this world! What we come discover and know, as we relate with him... Is that we can be loved unconditionally... no matter how much you've messed up, God loves you. We discover that guilt and shame aren't forever things.... things that you'll take to your grave. We discover what forgiveness is.... we discover what freedom is! In relationship with God we can know and experience what it feels like to be totally accepted... cherished. We can know, deep within our souls, what it means to belong. Belong to God! His desires are for you, he wants to know you, love you, care for you. In this place we can know security, hope, a profound and lasting peace... Know that you're trusted, know joy, peace and rest for your soul. You are meant to know the love of God in all these ways and so much more! The truth is out there. And all of our answers are found in him!

Christianity is not primarily about moral codes... about legalism, or values or creeds... Its about a love affair! Between God and you! This is the truth for every human being. And we'll only know it as we come to know him! And how do we do that?

I read an interesting quote about an X-files episode from their third year of production. Let me read it to you... "In one especially interesting episode, entitled "Revelations" a little boy manifests stigmata, with blood inexplicably welling out of his hands and side. There's a twist. This time Mulder is the materialist skeptic, suspecting hysteria or some such. Its Scully, reared a Catholic and wearing a cross around here neck, who insists they consider the possibility that God is displaying the wounds of Christ on this bewildered child. She is so shaken by these events that, at the end of the program she retreats to a confessional for the first time in years. [SLOW] In the show's trademark darkness, she tells the priest that she is afraid, afraid most of all that 'God really may be speaking. And no one is listening.'" ...LONG PAUSE....

We come to know God by listening... listening to his word {BIBLE}... and listening to his Word, as it was and is spoken to us through the person of his son Jesus Christ. I don't know whether or not stigmata really do appear in people or not.... But I do know that blood did flow from the hands of Christ and from his side. The fact that he was crucified is history. And the Bible teaches that 3 days later he was resurrected by God the Father. And through his death and resurrection we can find life! What? Through someone's death we find life? Doesn't make sense! No it doesn't But that doesn't mean it isn't true!**[Basic GOSPEL message here]**

It takes faith to believe this crazy Easter story... That's hard to do... to really with all of your life... every fibre of your being... One X-file motto is to "Trust no one" Our motto here is "Trust Someone" That's a capitalized someone! You can trust in a God who loves you with the kind of love we talked about earlier. He's your only hope. He's the only answer! The Truth is out there! And he's dying to show you his love!

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