

# Outreach Posters

## August 2015

You might think statistics is the most boring topic on the planet. It really isn't! As a lecturer in statistics at the University of Melbourne, I get to analyse and solve real world problems for doctors, engineers, politicians, architects, farmers... the list goes on. Being analytical has become a life habit – annoyingly so, according to some of my friends.

Recognising bias is fundamental to statistics. So, although I grew up in a Christian family, I could never have stayed Christian out of convenience. I could never live with that kind of faith. **I'd like to share some of the ways in which my work in statistics relates to the way I think about my Christian faith.**

At the theoretical end of statistics, mathematical laws testify to an orderly world and the mind of an orderly creator. Historically, it was a firm belief in an unchanging God that drove scientists to explore the world and its patterns.

At the practical end of statistics, where I work, the challenge is to find solutions that can help people. But in order to argue for a solution, you need a clear ethical framework and you can't have one of those unless you have an objective source of truth and morality. You may be surprised to hear that the most influential source in the world is the Bible.

**Is there any basis for trusting the Bible?** Pierre-Simon Laplace, a highly influential mathematician and statistician, was known for encouraging caution when encountering unexpected data. His view has been summed up as:



“extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence”. Certainly the claims of the Bible are extraordinary. It details a supernatural God, active in the natural world.

The most extraordinary claims revolve around Jesus. The Bible anticipated his arrival for more than a thousand years and then records how he exceeded all possible expectations. Jesus spoke with great authority and performed remarkable miracles. Eyewitnesses record that Jesus understood his death to be a payment for human rebellion against God. In his resurrection from the dead Jesus showed a way beyond death.

The most compelling data I have for the love of God are the death and resurrection of Jesus. Certainly not the kind of data that comes across my desk each day! But I teach my students that **evidence takes different forms.**

I'm grateful to God for the freedom to ask hard questions and for providing so many rich and reasonable answers. I hope and pray that my story encourages you to explore the data about Jesus for yourself.

Read more of Sandy's thoughts at [www.whyIbelieve.org.au](http://www.whyIbelieve.org.au)