

Importance of Origins (Part 2)

Review

Understanding the **importance of origins in developing a DVP** was the topic of our last lesson. We discovered how the following foundational questions will be answered through our study of Genesis:

- Who is God and what is He like?
- Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?
- Is truth absolute and where does it come from?
- Where did evil come from? Is there any escape from it?

The answers to these questions form what we would call our **ultimate assumptions or beliefs** needed to know anything. Without answers to these questions you would never attempt to gain knowledge on anything.

So much of what we need to make sense of this world is found in God's first book of the Bible. Also, we looked at several passages in Revelation to see the **symmetry of the Bible**. The Creation event was such a monumental event that we will still be praising God for it in heaven. This event will be remembered and recalled eternally!

We also looked at how origins is really at the heart of all men. It's very important to realize that whenever you discuss origins you're really discussing a person's ultimate belief, and that ultimate belief is part and parcel with their view of God. A person's view of origins will always reveal a person's view of God (or god) - they are that closely related.

Our last lesson also covered the **importance of origins for meaning**. All communication requires a certain set of basic truths. We looked at three:

1. Meaning Requires Classification - What are the necessary conditions of the world needed to classify things?
2. Meaning Requires Stability - Is the universe stable so that I can depend on my classifications remaining the same.
3. Meaning Requires Context - Does my classification fit in the immediate context of what I see and ultimately to the entire context of the universe?

As we learn more about the doctrine of Creation we are going to see how God created man in His image so that man comes with the needed abilities to understand his

environment. Because man is made in God's image he can **classify** things with language that is meaningful. Because the universe is **stable** we can be sure that what we learn about our classifications isn't going to transmute into something else later. And because God created the entire universe, our classifications can be meaningful within their **contexts**. This context only makes sense in light of one's view of origins.

Let me briefly expand this idea of how meaning is found in context. We always classify things with the context in mind, this is the only way to get the meaning. If I'm going to get meaning in life I've got to push the boundaries of context out all the way to eternity. However, the problem for the unbeliever is that when you push as far as you can go there's nothing there. According to their worldview there is only mystery and chaos and you don't get meaning from mystery and chaos.

We summed up our thoughts on the importance of origins for meaning when we said: you can't say anything about anything without saying (by implication) something about everything. The term "everything" points unmistakably to origins our ultimate context. If this is true, then is it possible for anyone to be neutral on the origins issue?

In this lesson we want better understand the idea of neutrality so that we can avoid buying into its agenda. This will greatly help us to make sense of the controversy surrounding origins and how it robs us of real meaning.

Finally we will turn to what God has said in His Word concerning all of mankind's heart desire to understand the issue of origins and their place in it.

No Neutral Ground

This is an issue that has really robbed the Christians of today in their ability to stand for God's Word as the final authority. What is often proposed to us is that we be "open minded and not make a commitment to one way of thinking." This desire strikes at the very heart of our Christian beliefs as well as our ability to walk by faith.

Christians are often approached with the idea that our faith is "OK" within the privacy of our soul or in our home, but that when it comes to secular education it needs to be set aside - leave your religion at home they say. Is this something that we ought to do? Is this what the Lord desires - to put His Word on the shelf? Should we compartmentalize God's Word to only certain areas of our life?

It's important to realize that the claim of neutrality would have us believe that when it comes to education (or any other subject) God and His Word have no bearing and therefore is not needed.

Well Scripture is in complete contrast to this idea of neutrality. God's Word demands us to see the truth contained as our final authority for ALL areas of life, even in our secular education. It does this for a good reason. Paul tells us that it is Christ

in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col 2:3)

Notice how he says *all* wisdom and knowledge is found in the person of Christ. There isn't any room for exceptions here. Whether it be about a historical event, the chemical makeup of a substance, the writings of a famous author, or even the laws of logic. It is difficult to grasp at first, but every area of learning and thought is related to Christ.

I am the way and the truth and the life. (John 14:6)

Based on the Bible, if we avoid Christ in any area of our thinking then we are not basing our thoughts on truth and are being misled. The Bible also tells us that

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Prov. 10:9)

Paul goes on to warn us of the deception that neutrality creates:

I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. (Col 2:4)

...see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:8)

It's important to understand that Christ and His Word are the foundations, and final authority for every area of thinking. Let's look at a popular example of how we can deal with neutrality in the real world.

Neutrality in Education

While the issue of neutrality can be proposed in many different areas of learning (i.e. history, science, literature, philosophy or whatever), we are going to focus on a popular controversy that Christians regularly face in the area of education.

To avoid controversy over origins some people, especially teaching institutions adopt different strategies of attempted neutrality. You can't blame them as they are caught between two opposing sides. On one side are the attorneys and liberal Christians groups saying that evolution must be taught because its science. On the other side are Bible believing parents and students who say that creationism must be taught

because its truth. So in order to try and please both sides they attempt to develop a neutral ground strategy.

The strategies usually are built upon reasoning like this. The biblical creation story deals with the "who" and "why" questions which can't be verified scientifically (i.e. observational reasoning). Thus creationism is "religious". By contrast, the evolutionary origin story deals with the "how" questions which can be verified scientifically. So by referring to evolution as "science" it can be taught in schools, but they cannot teach religion because they must be religiously neutral. Therefore, public schools can teach only evolution, not creationism.

Unfortunately for the sake of public education, this strategy rests on a number of invalid ideas. Here, however, let's deal just with the idea that you can be religiously neutral.

Religious Neutrality Theory

The religious neutrality theory says that whether or not the God of the Bible exists and has created the universe is not important to whatever the subject at hand. This statement, it turns out, makes the not-so-hidden, not-so-neutral claim that God could not be the Creator. First, it denies that He could have any fundamental role in structuring the universe (if He did, then He would obviously be important to the subject at hand). Second, it insists that each object in the universe does not bear testimony to Him (otherwise, He would be present in every subject). Third, it elevates above God an ethical standard that justifies ignoring His Presence (we "ought" to think this way and not another way). Overall, the neutral theory is not itself neutral and therefore is self-contradictory.

Article Review

This is an excellent article from Answers In Genesis written to deal with the exact issue of proposed neutrality in the public schools. The author is responding to a humanist/evolutionist who proposes the need to avoid teaching "any religious viewpoint" in schools.

Use the link below to read the article and then return to this lesson to conclude the matter of the neutral ground.

➡ <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/11/02/feedback-public-schools>

I conclude the matter by adding to the statement we made in our last lesson. You can't say anything about anything without saying (by implication) something about everything, including non-neutral statements about God and origins.

Not Neutrality but Tolerance

Religious neutrality is not the same as religious tolerance. Tolerance means I tolerate someone who holds an erroneous belief, not that I think his belief and my belief are equally correct. Neutrality, unlike tolerance, insists that all such beliefs are "correct" because in the area of religion there is no true absolute knowledge. Neutrality asserts its own theory of truth: all religious opinion is relative ("that's what works for you"). Confusing neutrality for tolerance is quite common today.

Origins is a perspective that gives ultimate meaning to everything we can think and talk about. It expresses the basic assumptions of a man's heart. That is why origins "lurks in the background" of everyday conversation. That is why it is such a sensitive subject with most people.

With such volatility, origins is a subject that demands extraordinary toleration to discuss. As Bible-believing Christians we must balance truth and grace. We must respect the Lordship of Christ intellectually by insisting upon His truth. We must state our severe critique of origin-myths that deny Him. Nevertheless, in grace we must tolerate our neighbors who think otherwise--tolerate them as people for whom Christ died even though we sharply disagree with them over the matter of origins.

Eternity in their Hearts

I now want to turn to one final feature of the unbelieving mind that will prepare us to grasp our journey through the creation doctrine. This has to do with the reasons why man search to find answers for ultimate meaning in their life.

The book of Ecclesiastes is part of a collection in the Bible called wisdom literature. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, a man the Bible says is the wisest man ever to live. This book captures the many efforts of Solomon to find meaning and fulfillment in life.

Solomon had a lot of wealth so he could have all the expensive material things he wanted. He had power so he could have as much control and sex as he wanted. Solomon also had time to do vast experiments to see what kinds of projects might provide meaning to life. In all of this he comes to a single conclusion - the world doesn't satisfy, only a relationship with God satisfies.

Part of his this conclusion is found in Ecclesiastes 3:11. In this verse Solomon presents a puzzle, a very powerful puzzle. If you really grasp its meaning you'll save a lot of time and energy in your own life. Note what he says,

He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Look closely and observe how God has set eternity on the hearts of men. What is "eternity"? Is this eternal life with God? No. Man only gets that when he believes in Christ for the payment of his sins. So what does the phrase "set eternity in their heart" mean? Well it means that there is a sense of eternity in every human heart, whether the person is an atheist or a Christian there is a sense of eternity. Where does it come from? God puts it there.

God made us in His image and a part of that image is a sense of eternity. This means that God put a drive in our human hearts to figure this life out. Who am I? What is my life all about? Why am I here? What is going on? We all have a drive within us to answer these questions, because we've got to get meaning in our life. Do you remember where we get meaning? From context.

So, there's me, my family, the society I live in, the place of society in world history and then finally the beginning of world history. So, where are we going with this? We're going back to origins, because we've got to push the walls of context out into greater and greater circles of context to get meaning. Ever wonder why there are billions of dollars spent on space exploration every year? Because people have a sense of eternity in their hearts and they are trying to answer the ultimate question, where did I come from?

As hard as the world is pushing these walls of context there remains a big problem - there's nothing there. When I get there ultimately its mystery. There's no meaning there. So, people just crumple into, what is called in philosophical circles, existentialism or worse nihilism. We try to ignore the big questions and fill our lives full of experiences thinking that somehow this will satisfy us. It won't, because God has set eternity in the hearts of men, and until we push the context out to eternity we won't be satisfied. No amount of money to fund all our escapades is ever going to satisfy. It's just like throwing marbles in the ocean. You can never fill the ocean. The only thing that is going to fill the human heart is the eternal God. That's how God made us. He made us to have fellowship with Him and no human being is going to be satisfied until he has that.

Notice the other side of the mystery in v 11. The first part of the mystery is that God has put eternity in our heart, but then look at why He has done this, so that

they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

In other words, starting with yourself, starting with human reason, logic and experience you will never get to the bottom of life. God is incomprehensible. I didn't say we couldn't know Him in a personal way, but to totally comprehend His being is an impossibility. That's a great comfort because every idol that man makes, by definition is comprehensible, because man made them, so the mark of the true God is that He is incomprehensible, He lies beyond the power of reason to en-capture. All we know about God is what He chooses to show us, and if He does not choose to show us something, we know nothing about Him. That's why the Bible is so important.

God has structured the universe to prompt us into a relationship with Him. On the one hand He shows us His magnificence through our study of science. We can discover unfathomable things in just the realm of science. But a funny thing happens along the way. As we begin to get involved with this world we begin to see these things, and we begin to probe beyond further and further until we finally realize that it goes on endlessly.

Take the cell for example. Just over a hundred years ago the cell was considered a 'black box'. A 'black box' was something you knew was there but you didn't know what was inside it. So man kept pressing to create tools to look inside and once they did they found out that it wasn't just a blob of protoplasm, there's was a whole lot going on there. These little cells have power generators called mitochondria, they've got little roads that are built and disassembled to transport things, it just keeps going on and on. And when we can't go further with the tools we have we start creating more tools to see what's next!

It's embedded in this journey of learning and having a deeper understanding of the world around us that we come to further recognize God. The following verse starts to come alive in every human's mind:

***19** since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

When man comes to grips with this ultimate God reality in his heart he has to make a decision. He has to come to a point of realization that what he needs can't be filled by what the world has to offer. He has to change his mind about knowing God further. It might sound something like this:

Alright, I give up. I know all this is pointing to you. I know you're there. I know I've been hiding from you all these years. And I give up? This stuff doesn't give me meaning. It doesn't fulfill. I need you. You will fulfill."

So going back to Ecclesiastes 3:11 we see this truth that God has given man a sense of His presence and eternity as well as an inability to understand it all. God has structured the universe in such a way that man will never get it on his own. Without recognizing the final authority of God as truth, man will continue to press for meaning and answers with no success.

This is an extremely offensive idea, extremely offensive! The modern person just flies off the handle at this - "I will not accept a universe in which I can't dictate the terms of knowing." The concept of final authority in truth is a very touching thing today. As we continue with the course we will begin to see how this subject creeps into every subject we learn. Most all education today has subtly intertwined the idea that man can dictate his terms of knowing.

However, God does not allow man the place of final authority. He does not permit HVP to stand as a judge for what is truth. God says, the He alone is the Creator-owner of knowledge and man is subject to knowing what God has allowed him to know. Man does not stand as the god of truth. He must depend on God to initiate and provide an environment that truth can be learned.

This idea that there's a final authority external to the heart of man is the essence of what we see in the gospel message. Sin comes out of the unwillingness to accept an authority outside of SELF, "I want to be the authority", man says. No matter the subject, whether it's math, science, literature, anything else, sin has so gripped the "knowing process" to often man is unwilling to respond to the eternity in their heart.

Conclusion

Understanding the conditions and tactics of the unbelieving mind is not only helpful as we face the world, it also helps us understand our own temptations as believers. Remember that where the rubber meets the road in all of this is a change of mind which leads to a change of behavior. As you take in more DVP you will be challenged and confronted with truth. Your HVP will constantly be pressed and challenged as God works in your mind to transform your thinking.

Understanding the desire of man towards religious neutrality is very important because its what we are tempted with in the real world. I can guarantee that if you ever talk about your faith, you will come up against this thinking. Just remember that, while we can't be religiously neutral, we can be tolerant towards the unbeliever or the struggling Christian. Don't forget that God has placed eternity in their hearts as well.