

Please find the insert in your worship flier. It gives you an outline of today's message so you can follow along. On the back is a daily guide to help you in your study of the Bible. Each day you get a verse and a few questions. I hope you'll use it to help you get into the Word.

This is how the Bible begins (Genesis 1:1-5) - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*

Maybe more than any other passage of the Bible, this passage has become the intersection between secular and sacred in our culture. This is where science, religion, education and government all meet ... and the question all of them are asking is: ***Who gets to decide what is true when it comes to God, the origins of our universe and the evolution of life?***

Now ... maybe you were like me growing up. As a child, that story in the Bible of how God created the world was never a question. Even when I compared it to what I was learning about evolution in public school, I never felt threatened or conflicted. I figured ... this world is pretty huge and explaining it would have to be pretty complicated. Maybe it takes both the Bible and science to get the whole picture. Then I went to college and took some classes in biblical criticism and discovered a whole world of people who *call themselves Christians* but who *don't* believe in the Genesis account of creation. That was the beginning for me of dismantling most of what I'd always been taught to believe about the Bible and God. I found out that for a lot of people, Genesis is just a myth and for them science has better explanations for things. So I

went from thinking that it takes both the Bible and science to get the whole picture, to thinking that maybe the Bible and science are in conflict.

That idea really took root with Charles Darwin. He published a book in the 1800s called *Origin of the Species*, where he introduced his theory of evolution. That idea threatened traditional views of creation because Darwin basically rejected the need for a Creator. The debate over whether or not Darwin's theory could be taught in public school ended up in a courtroom in 1925, with a trial in Tennessee ... known as the "Scopes Monkey Trial" ... which sought to overturn a law banning the teaching of evolution. The question on trial was: did the First Amendment permit states to ban teaching of a theory that contradicted religious beliefs?

In the end, the court decided to let the law against teaching evolution stand ... but since then, a number of major cases have come before lower courts and even the Supreme Court. The most recent battle has been with the Kansas Board of Education, which voted in 1999 to remove evolution from the list of subjects tested on state standardized tests. Since then ... 2000 ... 2004 ... 2006 ... the battle has raged between voters in Kansas and the Board of Education. Who gets to decide what is taught in the public square as truth?

Augustine, who lived nearly 1,500 years before Darwin said that the issue is not the authority of the Bible but its right interpretation. So how we read the Bible makes all the difference in the world. **Is the Bible ... history? Biology? Or theology?** Is it a story about people, about the world ... or about God? And **is science ... fact, or one explanation among many?** Again, as Augustine said, the issue is not the validity of science but the right interpretation of it. Like the Bible, scientific data still has to be interpreted. So really ... it comes down to how we interpret the Bible and science.

One camp is all the people who believe in **evolution**. That camp accepts what Darwin argued ... that natural selection and environmental factors together explain the diversity of life we see on earth. An evolutionist is likely to believe that the earth is anywhere from 5 billion to 15 billion years old.

**Creationists** make up another camp. Creationists believe the Genesis story is literally true, with God creating the world in six, literal 24-hour days. Creationists reject evolution, or at least the idea that over time, one species can become another species. Inside the creationist camp, there are still other camps. **Young earth creationists** believe that the earth is not 5 billion years old, but less than 10,000 years old. They generally believe that Genesis contains a complete listing of the generations from Adam and Eve to historical times.

**Old earth creationists** would say that the Genesis account is correct, but that there is wiggle room especially when it comes to the timing. Maybe the days mentioned in Genesis were not the same length as our days now. They would trust 2 Peter 3:8, which says – *Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.* An Old Earth Creationist trusts that the story is true, even if we don't understand all the details.

Then ... mixed in with both camps ... evolution and creation ... there are **Intelligent Design** proponents. These are the people who believe there is too much complexity and order in this world to imagine that it could have happened by sheer chance or natural selection. Someone was behind it. And they may believe that this Someone was the God of the Bible ... or they may not.

All of these camps are asking questions of the Bible (is it history, biology or theology?) and they are also asking questions of science (is it fact or one explanation among many?). But as Adam Hamilton says, the real question ... especially on this issue of evolution and how it meshes with scripture ... is not how and when (in other words, it isn't so much about history and timelines) ... the real question is not how and when, but who and why?

Look again with me at Genesis 1:1-3 - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

Look at those first four words. They are loaded. "*In the beginning, God ...*" Those words tell us that before anything else, God was. The next word in that first sentence is just as powerful. "*In the beginning, God created.*" So the very first thing we know about God is that he came first. The second thing we learn is that his nature is that of a creator. In verse two, we learn a third thing ... that God is Spirit. He hovers. And in verse three, we learn that God's word has power. When He speaks, things happen. Light appears. Time is established. So in these first three verses ... the very first three verses of the Bible ... we learn that God came first, and that He is Creator, Spirit and Word. The writer of this book uses the opportunity of creation to introduce us to the Creator!

It would be like using the game of golf to introduce us to Jack Nicklaus. If someone wanted to make documentary of Jack Nicklaus's life, he would probably not begin with a detailed explanation of the game of golf. He definitely wouldn't spend time explaining how golf courses are constructed or how the golf club has evolved over time. Even though Jack Nicklaus

designs golf courses and pitches brands of golf clubs, I bet we'd hear very little in a documentary about him on what kind of grass he prefers to play on, or how the clubs he uses are made. Probably, in a documentary about Jack Nicklaus ... we'd just hear about the man ... and just enough about the game to appreciate his accomplishments.

You see the point? The question that Genesis answers for us is not *how and when* ... but *who and why*. Genesis is primarily theology ... the study of God. It tells us who created the heavens and the earth, and by the very complexity and order of it, we come to understand that this Creator is not just an Unmoved Mover ... but a caring and intimately involved Creator. So Genesis tells us who the Creator is, what his nature is, and how he relates to his creation.

And yes ... Genesis tells something of how he created ... but the real value of Genesis is that it answers the one question science can not answer. **It tells us what was in the beginning.**

Where did the first matter come from? That's the *one thing* no scientific theory can adequately explain. And ... Genesis gives us a much better answer to the question of order and complexity than science can give. Rather than asking us to believe that out of some huge explosion the complexity of the human eyeball evolved ... rather than asking us to believe that, it offers the much more important idea that there is an Intelligent Designer who lives and moves in a dimension we can not see ... except by His handiwork.

So we come back to the question: Should that be taught in public schools? Should public school teachers be required to include the idea of an Intelligent Designer? Well ... I don't know that my answer to that question is anything more than my opinion, but I'll tell you what I think. I think science teachers should teach science. But I would hope that the great science teachers would want their kids to explore all the theories ... not just one. I would expect that the

dissenting views on evolution (and there are lots of them) would be part of any well-rounded curriculum. Here's the one thing I personally don't want for my own child. I would not want a public school teacher teaching my child how to interpret the Bible. I do not want the State to teach my child the Living Word.

**So ... how can we personally respond to this debate?**

**1. Be prepared to offer your faith.** 1 Peter 3:15 says - *In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.* I believe the best way to respond to the debate between science and religion is be as educated as possible on the hope that we have. My problem back in college was that I didn't have a good defense for my faith, so when I heard other ideas I got lost. This is why we take such care in giving the basics of the faith to our sixth graders. I want our children to learn science, but they will need spiritual tools to rightly divide that information ... because science is not the source of all truth. Tony Campolo says the best use of science is to "help us make sense out of what we believe and to enable us to critique and develop what we believe into a theology and guide for everyday living."

**2. Understand that we are both dust and divinity.** Genesis 2:7 says - *The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.* In other words, as Oswald Chambers says, we are both dust and divinity. Science can explain the dust, but only God can explain our divinity. And even science acknowledges that there are more dimensions than what we physically experience. Are you educating your children with this in mind? If not, then we're only giving them half the story.

**3. Teach your children the Bible.** Ephesians 6:4 says - *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* I am passionate about this ... that the *spiritual* education of our children does not belong in the public school classroom. Why? Because unless the Bible is taught as *Living Word*, it is taught irresponsibly. If the Bible is taught only as history or literature, that does more harm than good. The gospel message is a pearl of great price, and the Bible is *Living Word*. Why would we leave something that valuable to a stranger in a public school? As parents ... not only biological parents but spiritual parents ... we should be the ones to teach our children about God and Jesus and the Bible. Teach your children the Word of God. And then ... as the Word says ... when they are old they will not depart from it.

The most important question of all is who. And the answer is ... a great and loving, all-powerful God. At the end of Genesis, chapter one ... after God has made everything ... he sits back and looks and the Bible says (Genesis 1:31) - *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.* That's the take-away. Life is good because God is good.