

In Pursuit of a Biblical Worldview

Our Place in God's World



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Unit 1



The Truth About Science & the Bible

Which Truth Should You Believe?

TRUTH

by memory – Romans 1:20 (NIV)

"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."

in Bible –

An important element of becoming a mature and equipped follower of Jesus Christ is learning to see the world from God's point of view. We call this developing a biblical worldview. Your worldview is your personal philosophy, your own pattern of thinking about life, that guides your decisions and the way you live. Christ's followers are committed to building a biblical worldview by understanding and applying Scripture to every arena of life. As you grow in this endeavor you will inevitably have to confront the competing philosophies that are explicitly promoted or implicitly embraced in society around you.

During this section of *The Journey*, you will explore the foundations of a biblical worldview and its implications for living as Christ's followers in God's world. You will also face an influential worldview in our society – naturalism – and see how its proponents have succeeded in secularizing society by setting up a false contradiction between science and the Bible.

If you are struggling to have meaningful personal worship use the **PRAISE** model and the **5 Targets of Prayer** based the Lord's Prayer. These can help you get started on a life-long habit of personal worship. Remember also that you need a specific place and time to devote to this crucial building block of your spiritual life.

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Deuteronomy 10:14; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 47:2; Psalm 90:1-2; Romans 1:19-20 – These verses are just a sampling of many texts that describe the cornerstones of a biblical worldview. Christians treat these verses as if they are describing facts about God and the universe.

What foundational facts about God and the universe do these verses teach?

Facts about God

Facts about the universe

The facts about God and the universe you listed above should impact the way you think about life (your worldview). Consider these examples of how these facts influenced the thinking of Kings David and Solomon:

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God...'" (David, Psalm 53:1)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge..." (Solomon, Proverbs 1:7)

These are brief, logical responses to the basic facts about God and the universe that constitute the foundation of a biblical worldview. Now, how do you respond to the facts you listed above? Write a few of your own responses by completing this sentence, "If what these verses teach about God and the universe is true, then..."

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John 18:33-38 – This dialogue between Pontius Pilate and Jesus is an example of the debate over whether objective truth really exists, or whether truth is merely “in the eye of the beholder”. Objective truth means that something is inherently true and factual regardless of one’s personal point of view.

The question Pontius Pilate asked in verse 38 reveals that he believed that truth is subjective, that it is determined by one’s personal preferences, values or interpretation. What does this passage tell you about Jesus’ position? Did He believe truth was objective or subjective? Explain your answer.

Now, consider Jesus’ position on truth with the basic facts about God and the universe. How should these affect your worldview?

Colossians 2:1-9 – In this passage, Paul is admonishing the Colossian church to fully understand the mysterious facts about Christ in whom, “...*the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*”(v 9). Paul wants them to fully embrace Christ and to understand that the facts about Christ are at odds with the pagan philosophies of the day. He does not want any of them taken “...*captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.*”(v 8).

Think carefully about verses 4 and 8. What contemporary philosophies in our culture may be at odds with the facts about Christ?

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to summarize –

A biblical worldview is founded upon these facts: There is one, infinite and eternal God. This God created all things, living and non-living. He rules all things by His power. In Him, creation continues to exist, and to Him the whole creation belongs. The physical universe He created is finite; it had a beginning. It was designed to bring praise to His master-craftsmanship, and simple observation of creation is sufficient evidence of its Creator.

All of these facts can be drawn from the first five **in Bible** study passages. As you read these statements, did you find yourself struggling with the idea of calling them facts? Perhaps you would feel more comfortable referring to them as beliefs? If so, then this is a clue that you are feeling the conflict of two radically different worldviews – the biblical worldview and the worldview accepted by most of the scientific community. You want to hold to your beliefs and nurture the spiritual component of your life, but you don't want to have to deny scientific facts – in essence, checking your brain at the door – in order to do so.

Although there are exceptions, the scientific community in general denies that the above statements about God and the universe are factual. Most within the scientific community would position science and religion this way: Science deals with facts; religion deals with values. Science is an exercise of reason; religion is an exercise of faith. This is what the scientific community would have you believe. Science text books, museums and popular television shows would all have you believe that science deals with objective, verifiable facts, while subjective beliefs and values are the domain of religion. When science and Christianity face off over the creation of the universe and the origin of life, science portrays itself as being purely objective, observing the plain facts of nature without bias. In contrast, it portrays Christianity as being biased by its philosophical commitment to the existence of God, thus rendering it unqualified to participate in a reasonable discussion of how we all got here. If this is true, then any statement the Bible affirms about the natural world (whether by Moses, David, Paul or Jesus) should be considered factually suspect at best.

How do Christians answer this argument? Science has clearly positioned itself on the higher ground by claiming that the Bible has nothing to say about the facts of the natural world. Should Christianity really be characterized this way, or is there a flaw in the way science has been allowed to frame the debate over origins? To be fair, let us admit the bias of Christian faith. Christians do assume the existence of the creator God, needing no proof other than the evidence they can see with their own eyes. *"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..."* (Romans 1:20, NIV) Christians see marvelous order and design in the world around them, so they assume that there is a

Designer. The philosophical name for this assumption is *super-naturalism*. This means that Christians assume there is a supernatural cause and design for all that exists in the natural world.

Now, what about science? Science is supposed to be a pure, unbiased testing and description of observed phenomena, right? Wrong. Science has its own philosophical assumption, too. It's called *naturalism*. Naturalism is the belief that all that exists can be explained by purposeless, random natural causes. As the late astronomer Carl Sagan said, "Nature is all there is or ever was or ever will be." This is not science; it is philosophy and like all philosophies, naturalism has its logical consequences. If naturalism is true, then there is no God to worship. There is no absolute moral truth. There is no life after death, and there is no purpose to life other than what you create yourself. Thus, like the cynical Pilate, truth becomes whatever is most expedient and brings the best advantage.

Ironically, naturalism is a belief – a philosophy requiring faith – because it cannot be scientifically tested and proven to be true or false. It is simply the interpretive lens that many scientists believe is required in order to do good science. For example, how often have you heard it said on a nature television show that such-and-such plant and insect have evolved over time so that they are now perfectly adapted to one another? The problem is that this is not a scientific statement. How do they know such an evolution took place? Did they observe it? Could they test it? – Clearly no. They merely observed the symbiotic relationship of the plant and insect and assumed that it came about by unguided natural causes. However, though observing that this phenomenon exists *is* a scientific endeavor; assuming a natural cause for it *is not*. This is philosophical thinking which is not based on the observed facts. Contrary to the way the scientific community has positioned itself against religion, the debate over how things came to be isn't really about facts and data as much as it is about the worldviews through which those facts are interpreted.

Over the next few weeks, you'll see just how the scientific community's commitment to naturalism has influenced its thinking in regards to the creation/evolution debate. Consequently, you shouldn't assume that scientific perspectives on these topics have bare facts on their side, placing a biblical worldview at an automatic intellectual disadvantage. Christian faith is not incompatible with reasonable observation of the universe, but it *is* opposed to the philosophy of naturalism which masquerades as science. Therefore, as you develop a biblical worldview you should, "*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*" (Colossians 2:8).

EQUIPPING

Memorize the first five books of the Old Testament by using the equipping exercise, "Learning the Books of the Old Testament" at the end of this unit. Over the next several weeks you should be able to memorize the 39 books of the Old Testament and recite them with the 27 books of the New Testament in your group meeting.

Do you ever doubt the reliability of the Bible in light of what you are told by science? Do you ever wonder whose truth you should believe? Use the space below to journal about any questions you may have related to science and the Bible. Try to think about how will you resolve your questions and commit yourself to doing the necessary investigation to develop a solid biblical worldview.

Is this the first time you have thought about developing a biblical worldview? If so, you may have personal beliefs or values that are inconsistent with the facts about God and the universe that you learned from the **in Bible** study passages. Take a few moments to prayerfully think about what you believe and value, and how you live. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see your heart and mind the way He sees it. Use the space below to journal about any inconsistencies that come to mind. How will you deal with these inconsistencies?

MISSION – DIALOGUING

"But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them?" (Romans 10:14, The Message)

Romans 10:14 asks the rhetorical question, "How will anybody hear about Jesus, unless somebody talks with them about Jesus?" The obvious answer is that they won't.

Witnessing – the word may bring to mind some pretty negative images. Perhaps you're thinking of that nutty looking guy standing outside the football game holding a big sign that reads, "Repent or Die!" If that's what witnessing is, you probably want no part of it. But you also know that your mission is to make the gospel known. And if you will not make it known, who will?

For the next several weeks you're going to learn about an approach to talking with people about Jesus that is neither nutty, nor confrontational. Some people have the gift for effectively proclaiming the gospel in monologue fashion, but for most of us, we need a tool that will help us dialogue with people as opportunities arise. *The Journey* will equip you to bring Jesus into your conversations with people in a warm, relational and intelligent way that is relevant to their experience of life. It isn't the only approach to witnessing, but many people find it to be a simple and effective way to be actively engaged in making the gospel message known to the least and lost.

You'll begin learning this approach next week. But first let's do a heart check. Even if you've never talked to anyone about Jesus before, do you want to? Are you finding your heart growing in a gospel-motivated desire to make Jesus known? Write your honest thoughts about witnessing here.

Now, examine your thoughts about witnessing in light of Romans 10:14. How would you pray about this to your loving Father? Sometimes, we don't want what God wants, and we can only pray that we would *want to* want what God wants. But even this prayer is acceptable to God when it is offered humbly in the name of Christ. Take a moment to write a prayer to God about the state of your heart in regards to developing a gospel-motivated missional life.

LEARNING THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Over the next several weeks you will memorize the 39 books of the Old Testament which are introduced by section and genre below. The books of the Old Testament are listed on the next page. Fill in the blanks on the final page to help you memorize.

Pentateuch (Genesis – Deuteronomy, 5 books) – Written by Moses, these books chronicle the period from the Creation through the exodus from Egypt, and include the various Laws given to Israel.

History (Joshua – Esther, 12 books) – These books continue Israel’s history from the conquest of Canaan by Joshua and the administration of the Judges and Samuel, through the rise of David’s Kingdom, the division of the Kingdom, and the ultimate exile of the northern Kingdom in Assyria, and the southern Kingdom in Babylon.

Poetry (Job – Song of Solomon, 5 books) – These books contain various kinds of songs, prayers, proverbs, and poetic stories.

The Prophets – The prophets were God’s spokesman who addressed the spiritual problems of their generation as well as foretold future events. The prophetic books are divided into two categories based on the length of the books:

- **Major Prophets** (Isaiah – Daniel, 5 books)
- **Minor Prophets** (Hosea – Malachi, 12 books)

Did you know?

- Most of the Old Testament was originally written in ancient Hebrew, which didn’t have any vowels! Because Hebrew gradually fell into disuse among Jews in the Roman Empire, Rabbis of the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. added a system of vowels to help preserve proper pronunciation when the Scriptures were read in the synagogue.
- The Old Testament was written over a period of approximately 1,000 years by a variety of men including kings, prophets, judges, priests, and even farmers.
- Ancient Scribes who copied the Old Testament by hand paid such meticulous attention to their work that *very* few variants were ever introduced. For example, comparison of a medieval copy of Isaiah with a copy dating to the 1st or 2nd century B.C. found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 shows that the two copies are almost identical, even though the Dead Sea Scroll copy was made over 1,000 years earlier.

The Books of the Old Testament

The Pentateuch: Genesis - Deuteronomy (5 books of Moses)

History: Joshua - Esther (12 books)

Poetry: Job - Song of Solomon (5 books)

Major Prophets: Isaiah - Daniel (5 books)

Minor Prophets: Hosea - Malachi (12 books)

Total: 39 Old Testament books

Genesis	1 & 2 Kings
Exodus	1 & 2 Chronicles
Leviticus	Ezra
Numbers	Nehemiah
Deuteronomy	Esther
Joshua	Job
Judges	Psalms
Ruth	Proverbs
1 & 2 Samuel	Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon	Obadiah
Isaiah	Jonah
Jeremiah	Micah
Lamentations	Nahum
Ezekiel	Habakkuk
Daniel	Zephaniah
Hosea	Haggai
Joel	Zechariah
Amos	Malachi

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E	1 & 2 C
L	E
N	N
D	E
J	J
J	P
R	P
1 & 2 S	E

S	O
I	J
J	M
L	N
E	H
D	Z
H	H
J	Z
A	M