

LESSON 9: November 12: Who is God? Engaging our culture. Part 3

INTRODUCTION

WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN OR READ THIS WEEK ON WORLDVIEWS?

Brian Hackwith sent me an email about the latest issue of Time Magazine and said, "Here's a good example of worldviews if I ever saw one..." Anyone read it? We will cover 3 topics from that article later on; is there a God, the relationship between science and religion and the question of faith and reason. BUT FIRST.....

A. A RECAP: (I said that last week's stuff was too good to just leave and move on to our next topic; so we want to finish last week's lesson and insert some new thoughts.

A BASIC PROPOSITION: There are three things that happen to us when we know/ understand/ are in relationship with God. 1. Exposes us. 2. Exposes our culture. 3. Creates a desire to answer God's call to go for Him. This 3rd part is our unfinished business and it is fueled by the Time Magazine article.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE CLIP 34:46 to 35:35 Sproul on the defense of Christianity>> 90% of the argument is "the existence of God and truth of God's Word"; 90% of the battle is in 2 areas: knowledge of God and authority of scripture brings us to our role as ambassadors for Christ.

2Co 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

B. EXPOSES OUR CALL TO GO FOR GOD.

A Ready Defense (witnessing) Josh McDowell & The Divine Imperative (ethics) Emil Brunner, and John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Faith. (Knowledge of God and faith and reason.)

1. THE ATTACK TODAY is in two basic areas; and Sproul says that 90% of our arguments must be in these same two areas: knowledge of God and reliability of scripture.

It wasn't much different than in the Apostle Paul's day, READ:
2 Co 10: 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." God's call to go for him. Go God!

- What do we demolish? arguments & pretensions against the knowledge of God.
- What do we defend? The knowledge of God: who God is and his word. (God is and he reveals himself, generally, in His creation and, specifically, in His Word, the Bible.) The attack today is against the existence of God and the credibility of God's Word. These are the pillars of the faith. Not surprisingly these are the first two areas Calvin discusses in his classic, The

2. Where are the strongholds that need to be demolished about the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD?

The tenets of Evolutionary Biology state that there is no God. One tenet of **evolutionary biology is that** we are evolving into something higher and higher is better, more intelligent. The OT is about primitive man. Since man has evolved into a better species (man has come of age), WE CAN SAY THAT the O.T. is irrelevant, just myths and fairy tales, the fantasy that the primitives made up. The myth of God is dead due to evolutionary biology.

TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLE:

- a. the topic: science verses religion in light of evolutionary biology.
- b. the dabaters: 90 minute discussion by Dr Dawkins and Dr. Collins.

Dr. Richard Dawkins, perhaps its foremost polemicist, has just come out with *The God Delusion* (Houghton Mifflin), the rare volume whose position is so clear it forgoes a subtitle. The five-week New York Times best seller (now at No. 8) attacks faith philosophically and historically as well as scientifically, but leans heavily on Darwinian theory, which was Dawkins' expertise as a young scientist and more recently as an explicator of evolutionary psychology so lucid that he occupies the Charles Simonyi professorship for the public understanding of science at Oxford University.

Dr. Francis Collins is Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute since 1993, he headed a multinational 2,400-scientist team that co-mapped the 3 billion biochemical letters of our genetic blueprint. He was an atheist but at 27 became a Christian.

Here are excerpts from their exchange:

1. DOES GOD EXIST?

TIME: Professor Dawkins, if one truly understands science, is God then a delusion, as your book title suggests?

DAWKINS: The question of whether there exists a supernatural creator, a God, is one of the most important that we have to answer. I think that it is a scientific question. My answer is no.

TIME: Dr. Collins, you believe that science is compatible with Christian faith.

COLLINS: Yes. God's existence is either true or not. But calling it a scientific question implies that the tools of science can provide the answer. From my perspective, God cannot be completely contained within nature, and therefore God's existence is outside of science's ability to really weigh in.

ISSUE OF PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND SCIENCE that we covered. Science just studies things inside the universe, the how of Aristotle pointing down. Philosophy and religion have the same question of why, Plato, pointing up? Can they mix?

CAN RELIGION AND SCIENCE COEXIST?

IS EVOLUTION AND THE ACCOUNTS IN GENESIS 1&2 IN CONFLICT?

DAWKINS: Yes. For centuries the most powerful argument for God's existence from the physical world was the so-called argument from design: Living things are so beautiful and elegant and so apparently purposeful, they could only have been made by an intelligent designer. But Darwin provided a simpler explanation. His way is a gradual, incremental improvement starting from very simple beginnings and working up step by tiny incremental step to more complexity, more elegance, more adaptive perfection. Each step is not too improbable for us to countenance, but when you add them up cumulatively over millions of years, you get these monsters of improbability, like the human brain and the rain forest. It should warn us against ever again assuming that because something is complicated, God must have done it.

(How can we refute this? "more complex" = Darwin said: His theory falls if the simplest thing shows complexity. Then, "more elegance" = the law of thermodynamics. elegance or deterioration. Then, "the more adaptive perfection" = why is there so much evil in the world today? Should this not be lessening? Let's see what Collins says.

COLLINS: I don't see that Professor Dawkins' basic account of evolution is incompatible with God's having designed it. By being outside of nature, God is also outside of space and time. Hence, at the moment of the creation of the universe, God could also have activated evolution, with full knowledge of how it would turn out, perhaps even including our having this conversation. The idea that he could both foresee the future and also give us spirit and free will to carry out our own desires becomes entirely acceptable.

(Do you believe that God activated evolution?)

2. THE SIX UNIVERSAL CONSTANTS: had varied at all, it would have made life impossible. Collins gives the example of one, constant saying: "the gravitational constant -- if it were off by one part in a hundred million million, then the expansion of the universe after the Big Bang would not have occurred in the fashion that was necessary for life to occur. When you look at that evidence, it is very difficult to adopt the view that this was just chance. But if you are willing to consider the possibility of a designer, this becomes a rather plausible explanation for what is otherwise an exceedingly improbable event--namely, our existence.

DAWKINS gives 2 theories from Physicists to REDUCE the improbability and to claim that chance did create our universe. One theory being worked on is to say that these six constants

are not free to vary, and are an interlocking package. That reduces the probability of one part in a hundred million million. The other way is the multiverse way. The universe we are in is one of a very large number of universes. As the number of universes climbs, the odds mount that a tiny minority of universes will have the right fine-tuning.

Collins: "I actually find the argument of the existence of a God who did the planning more compelling than the bubbling of all these multiverses which seems quite a stretch of the imagination.

DAWKINS: I accept that there may be things far grander and more incomprehensible than we can possibly imagine. What I can't understand is why you invoke improbability and yet you will not admit that you're shooting yourself in the foot by postulating something just as improbable, magicking into existence the word God.

COLLINS: My God is not improbable to me. He has no need of a creation story for himself or to be fine-tuned by something else. God is the answer to all of those "How must it have come to be" questions.

DAWKINS: I think that's the mother and father of all cop-outs. It's an honest scientific quest to discover where this apparent improbability comes from. Now Dr. Collins says, "Well, God did it. And God needs no explanation because God is outside all this." Well, what an incredible evasion of the responsibility to explain. Scientists don't do that. Scientists say, "We're working on it. We're struggling to understand."

DOES THE ANSWER GOD ELIMINATE THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF INQUIRY?

COLLINS: Certainly science should continue to see whether we can find evidence for multiverses that might explain why our own universe seems to be so finely tuned. But I do object to the assumption that anything that might be outside of nature is ruled out of the conversation. That's an impoverished view of the kinds of questions we humans can ask, such as "Why am I here?", "What happens after we die?", "Is there a God?" If you refuse to acknowledge their appropriateness, you end up with a zero probability of God after examining the natural world because it doesn't convince you on a proof basis. But if your mind is open about whether God might exist, you can point to aspects of the universe that are consistent with that conclusion.

TIME: Could the answer be God?

DAWKINS: There could be something incredibly grand and incomprehensible and beyond our present understanding.

COLLINS: That's God.

DAWKINS: Yes. But it could be any of a billion Gods. It could be God of the Martians or of

the inhabitants of Alpha Centauri. The chance of its being a particular God, Yahweh, the God of Jesus, is vanishingly small--at the least, the onus is on you to demonstrate why you think that's the case.

MIRACLES SUCH AS THE RESURRECTION & THE CONSTANCY OF NATURAL LAW:
MY SERMON TOPIC

THE MORAL SENSE IN MAN: LEADS TO GOD or IS A MISFIRE OF EVOLUTION?

TIME: Dr. Collins, you have described humanity's moral sense not only as a gift from God but as a signpost that he exists.

COLLINS: There is a whole field of inquiry that has come up in the last 30 or 40 years--some call it sociobiology or evolutionary psychology--relating to where we get our moral sense and why we value the idea of altruism, and locating both answers in behavioral adaptations for the preservation of our genes. But if you believe, and Richard has been articulate in this, that natural selection operates on the individual, not on a group, then why would the individual risk his own DNA doing something selfless to help somebody in a way that might diminish his chance of reproducing? Granted, we may try to help our own family members because they share our DNA. Or help someone else in expectation that they will help us later. But when you look at what we admire as the most generous manifestations of altruism, they are not based on kin selection or reciprocity. An extreme example might be Oskar Schindler risking his life to save more than a thousand Jews from the gas chambers. That's the opposite of saving his genes. We see less dramatic versions every day. Many of us think these qualities may come from God--especially since justice and morality are two of the attributes we most readily identify with God.

DAWKINS: Can I begin with an analogy? Most people understand that sexual lust has to do with propagating genes. (OR SIN.) Copulation in nature tends to lead to reproduction and so to more genetic copies. But in modern society, most copulations involve contraception, designed precisely to avoid reproduction. Altruism probably has origins like those of lust. In our prehistoric past, we would have lived in extended families, surrounded by kin whose interests we might have wanted to promote because they shared our genes. Now we live in big cities. We are not among kin nor people who will ever reciprocate our good deeds. It doesn't matter. Just as people engaged in sex with contraception are not aware of being motivated by a drive to have babies, it doesn't cross our mind that the reason for do-gooding is based in the fact that our primitive ancestors lived in small groups. But that seems to me to be a highly plausible account for where the desire for morality, the desire for goodness, comes from

COLLINS: For you to argue that our noblest acts are a misfiring of Darwinian behavior does not do justice to the sense we all have about the absolutes that are involved here of good and evil. Evolution may explain some features of the moral law, but it can't explain why it should have any real significance. If it is solely an evolutionary convenience, there is really no such thing as good or evil. But for me, it is much more than that. The moral law is a reason to think of God as plausible--not just a God who sets the universe in motion but a God who cares

about human beings, because we seem uniquely amongst creatures on the planet to have this far-developed sense of morality. What you've said implies that outside of the human mind, tuned by evolutionary processes, good and evil have no meaning. Do you agree with that?

DAWKINS: Even the question you're asking has no meaning to me. Good and evil--I don't believe that there is hanging out there, anywhere, something called good and something called evil. I think that there are good things that happen and bad things that happen.

COLLINS: I think that is a fundamental difference between us. I'm glad we identified it.

SPEAKING ON THE TOPIC OF STEM CELL RESEARCH, THE ISSUE OF REASON AND FAITH SURFACED.

COLLINS: Faith is not the opposite of reason. Faith rests squarely upon reason, but with the added component of revelation. So such discussions between scientists and believers happen quite readily. But neither scientists nor believers always embody the principles precisely. Scientists can have their judgment clouded by their professional aspirations. And the pure truth of faith, which you can think of as this clear spiritual water, is poured into rusty vessels called human beings, and so sometimes the benevolent principles of faith can get distorted as positions are hardened.

Here is where we need to bring into our discussion "faith and reason."

1. Reason is important (Pope, let the cultures come together and debate their differences and Christian culture will prevail. Why? because of reason. In the same speech the Pope said that the Reformation was just a group of Christians lessening the importance of reason or the Greek mind. He made that statement with no discussion of what the reformers believed about faith. Collins "get distorted as positions harden"))

I have said repeatedly that what we believe as Christians makes sense. God has given us minds to think rationally. Common sense, rationality and conscience are very important parts of the makeup of our minds. BUT when I say that everything "makes sense" I am speaking from the side of faith.

When you look at how orderly, how beautiful, & how unique (complex too) the universe is, it points us to the Creator God. So our knowledge of the Creator should make sense when you look at creation.

When you read scripture and see how God has been working in history and in the lives of his people, it reveals knowledge of God and this knowledge makes sense. Arthur W. Pink's book, *The Attributes of God*, lists things in the Bible that describe God's character as: wisdom, love, faithfulness, grace, mercy, justice, patience, and goodness. These makes sense don't they? Do you have to be a Christian to understand wisdom or love or faithfulness?

Can we agree that a reasonable look at creation and the Bible would lead us all to believe in the existence of God? YES OR NO? If no, why not?

But for many it doesn't prove God's existence, says Calvin.

Calvin starts off his book stating that our knowledge to God is closely connected to our understanding of ourselves. Our sin nature reveals something of God, that God is "true light of wisdom, solid virtue, and overflowing goodness." (It's the argument that Jim explained that the definition of evil depends on their being goodness, but not vica-versa.) So, God is the yardstick, the true measure of wisdom, virtue and goodness. The awareness of divine perfection is to learn piety (a blend of reverence and love). We can never know God's essence, but we can learn something of his nature. Knowledge of God is implanted in the human mind (seed of religion or Augustine's "the God vacuum in the soul", we are restless until we rest in God).

BUT our delusion is that we think that we are "just, upright and holy." The knowledge of God is suppressed, inadvertently or deliberately by nearly everyone (99 out of a 100). Quotes Psalm 14:1. Calvin talks about superstitions, idol worship, willfulness by indulging the senses and opposing God's justice instead of obedience to his laws. These are all the ways that we mock God.

Knowledge of God for Calvin is evident in God's creation of the universe because it is perfect and beautiful (same as Dawkins and Collins). And yet we see creation and do not think of the creator. Calvin says, "This disease is not limited to dull common intellects, but affects the finest, and those who, in other ways, are remarkable intelligent." p.34.

THIS LEADS US TO FAITH AND SCRIPTURE OR REVELATION:

By faith we understand quoting Hebrews 11:3, "that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." Without faith we create imaginary visions of the mind or make wrong assessments and withhold praise due him.

We need scripture to scatter the darkness and be the "guide and teacher of God the Creator." Sound doctrine is in scripture alone. Scripture defines God's character accurately. But again on what basis? Is it by reason? Calvin says "p43, the testimony of Spirit is superior to reason." And, "if we are troubled by the small number of believers let us remember that no one can understand the mysteries of God except those to whom it is given." God has intertwined the truth of his Word with His Spirit so that we can trust it and see God's face.

Emil Brunner, a Swiss theologian, in *The Divine Imperative*, writes this:

"God is the origin of reason and, therefore is greater than reason. You can put reason into God but you can not put God into reason. God is the larger box. Therefore you must add faith. A God wholly comprehensible to reason would be no God because he would be no greater than our own reason. A God worthy of our worship must be beyond reason."

God is comprehensible, but he is beyond our comprehension. JOB 26:14 "...how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?"

Light travels at 186,000 miles per second and it takes something like 100,000 years to travel across the milky way alone which is amazing but it can be grasped by our reason. But when you get out in the wilderness and look up at the billions of glittering stars and ponder the vastness and the glory, you are only capable of looking with the eyes of faith. Reason has reached its limits. Of the 4 billion people on earth no two are alike, fingerprints and DNA tell the story and are grasped by reason. But when you hold a tiny baby and look at her little fingers; reason comes to an end and faith takes you into the mystery of human life. Faith says, not reason, that in God we live and move and have our being!

ULTIMATELY FAITH IS NECESSARY TO KNOW GOD.

3. Attacks on the Bible: Can you think of one other book that has had the attack on it as has the Bible and yet it remains the #1 seller. Throughout history men have tried to destroy God's Word.

Voltaire 1776 said: "100 years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." (100 years later Voltaires home was used to store Bibles and distribute them all over Europe.) Voltaire two years later: **"It took 12 men to start Christianity; one will destroy it."** That year he died.

Robert Ingersoll: "In 15 years I will have this book in the morgue." 15 years later he was in the morgue. A pastor purchased his desk and spent his life writing sermons on it. Claims to destroy the Bible have failed.

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918): A 19th century German liberal scholar who suggested the Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD), which theorizes that the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) was not written by Moses but evolved over time and was compiled from at least four sources written by various authors. Numerous scholars have refuted the theory. One of the fathers of higher criticism; (liberal theology came from him and others) **Scripture was the works of man that can not be trusted.**

The Jesus Seminar, started in 1985 in Berkley, California, by Robert Funk and thirty-five other liberal New Testament scholars. The Seminar,--which now includes about 100 members--meets twice a year to debate technical papers. At the close of debate on each agenda item, members vote using colored beads to indicate the degree of authenticity of Jesus' words or deeds.) – democratic voting process on God's Word, they cast beads, red, pink, grey, black. 82% of the words of Jesus were actually not spoken by him. Examine the Lord's prayer and the only words Jesus spoke was "Our Father."

4. The credibility of the word.

Why is it important to establish that a “spiritual” book like the Bible is also historically accurate? (This question harks back to the definition of “truth” established in Lesson 1: “Conformity to fact or reality.” Those who divorce “truth” from reality [as in “everyone creates his or her own personal truth”] might possibly be able to reconcile their so-called “spirituality” with a factually inaccurate Bible. But those who believe that truth = reality cannot.) Liberal Theology tries to undermine the authority of the Bible. What can be trusted and what is a contradiction.