

Unit 2



Before the Design

There was a Designer

TRUTH

by memory (option a) – Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

by memory (option b) – 2 Timothy 1:9 (NIV)

"God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time..."

in Bible –

Last week you learned that the modern scientific community sets up a false contradiction between science and the Bible, making itself superior by claiming the Bible only has to do with values and beliefs while science is concerned with the unbiased observation of facts. But this claim is itself, less than factual. Modern science is dedicated to the philosophical assumption of *naturalism* – the belief that all that exists can be explained by purposeless, random, natural causes. Naturalism cannot be scientifically tested and shown to be true or false, yet the scientific community in general is devoted to it with an element of faith. The supposed contradiction between science and the Bible is really a contradiction between two worldviews – the naturalism of modern science and the supernaturalism of historic, biblical Christianity.

This week you will learn that naturalism influences how scientists view the origin of the universe despite evidence that the universe is a result of intelligent design.

You can use the **in Bible** passages in your daily personal worship. Or, if you have another reading plan, be sure to specifically apply those passages to your life and respond to them by engaging with God in prayer. Don't forget the **PRAISE** approach to personal worship.

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Genesis 1:1-2:1 – Genesis is the beginning of God’s special revelation of Himself to humanity. It is a historical record that documents the cause and the factual events (though we could wish for more details) surrounding the origin of everything.

The following is a list of some of the most significant facts this passage teaches about God and the beginning of the universe. What other significant facts could you list? Try to add at least 4 more.

- Before anything existed, there was nothing, only God.
- God is the direct cause of the creation of everything – matter, energy, space, time and life.
- Creation took place in an ordered sequence of events.
- Creation was completed in 6 days.

1 Corinthians 2:6-8; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Titus 1:1-3 – These three passages contain a clue to the nature of time, and hence, the nature of the universe itself.

After reading these passages, how would you summarize what was in the mind of God before time began?

What does the phrase "*before the beginning of time*"/"*before time began*"(NIV) tell you about the nature of the universe?

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to summarize –

Last week you were introduced to some simple facts about God and the universe that form the foundation of a biblical worldview. These include the belief that there is one, infinite and eternal God. This God created all things, living and non-living, out of nothing. 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 definite beginning. He designed the universe to bring praise to His master-craftsmanship, and simple observation of His creation is sufficient evidence of its Creator.

This is not the view of naturalism. During the Enlightenment of the 18th century, many philosophers began drawing a stark contrast between reason and faith which led them to also propose that natural phenomena are best explained by natural, not supernatural, causes. Around the same time, scientists were formulating the laws of conservation of matter and energy. These laws state that while matter and energy can be transformed, neither can be destroyed or created. Combined with naturalistic philosophy, these laws presented a formidable argument for an uncreated, *eternal universe without beginning or end. They were held to be proof positive that the existence of the universe could be explained without appeal to any supernatural or intelligent cause.

This perspective dominated the scientific world until early in the twentieth century when evidence from several fields of knowledge began to turn the tide against a universe with no beginning. First, Albert Einstein published his theory of general relativity which predicted, among other things, that the universe must be expanding. This prediction was later confirmed and universally accepted by astronomers who observed that wherever they looked through their telescopes, the light from stars and galaxies exhibits a “red shift”, proving that distant objects in the universe are rushing away from us in all directions. This means that if one could follow time backwards, they would find the universe shrinking and shrinking until it reached its point of beginning (origin).

In addition, it is now understood that the 1st and 2nd laws of thermodynamics, taken together, actually provide a strong argument for an external cause to the beginning of the universe. The 2nd law (the law of entropy) tells us that the universe is in a steady state of decay, moving from order to increasing randomness. It is like a clock that is winding down. The inference then is that there must have been a time when it was fully “wound up”. But the 1st law (the law of conservation of matter mentioned above) implies the universe could not have wound itself up, because matter cannot create itself. So, if the universe had a definite beginning – a fully wound up point in time before which it did not exist – then something outside nature had to have brought it into existence and started it ticking. In spite of the scientific community’s bias toward naturalism, scientific observation of the laws and

*Interestingly, the idea of an eternal universe has been taught for centuries by many non-biblical religions. Some pantheistic religions even hold that the universe is, in some way, self-aware.

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motions of our universe have inescapably led to this conclusion: The universe had a beginning that cannot be explained by natural causes.

So what was this first cause? What brought a universe into existence out of nothing and established the physical laws that govern it? Was it God? – Naturalists aren't willing to admit as much. Many choose to ignore the first cause question, labeling it a matter of faith for religion to sort out. Others deny that the universe had a beginning at all by theorizing that the present expansion of the universe is merely part of a never-ending cycle of expansions and contractions. Still other naturalists deify the universe itself, proposing that it willed itself into being. The most that some naturalists may admit is that *if* a supernatural intelligence is the first cause, then this being hasn't touched the universe since its beginning. You may have noticed that these responses to the evidence of a supernatural beginning aren't very scientific. These proposals have no supporting evidence, nor can they be scientifically tested. They simply represent a sinful predisposition to suppress the truth (Romans 1:18) and refusal to give God the glory He is due (Romans 1:23). *"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools..."*(Romans 1:21-22).

Contrary to the proposals listed above, the universe bears the unmistakable marks of purposeful design, not blind, random forces. The fact that there is order amid staggering complexity in systems from the largest galaxy, to living cells, to the tiniest atomic particles, demonstrates that they were specifically, willfully designed by a super-intelligent being. Even secular scientists marvel at the "fine-tuning" of the natural laws that allow the universe to exist and the earth to support life – the rate of expansion of the universe, the mathematical value of gravity, the specific mass and electrical charges of protons and neutrons, the precise distance of our planet from our sun and even the existence of water as a liquid. Is it more reasonable to presume that these are merely arbitrary cosmic coincidences, or to acknowledge that the laws of physics were intentionally formulated, crafted by God to support His creation?

The emerging evidence of scientific study leads to the conclusion that the universe had a fixed beginning when all matter, energy, time and space (and the physical laws that govern them) came into being by the power of an intelligent designer. Not surprisingly, this picture agrees with the biblical worldview that rests upon this basic fact, *"In the beginning, God..."*(Genesis 1:1).

online –

Remember to visit www.perimeter.org/discipleshipcurriculum for this week's downloadable audio, video, or print resources.

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EQUIPPING

Memorize the twelve Historical books of the Old Testament using the “Learning the Books of the Old Testament” equipping exercise at the end of the previous unit. You can also use this memory aid:

“Joshua (**Joshua**) judged (**Judges**) Ruth (**Ruth**) before two Samuels (**1 & 2 Samuel**) who were both Kings (**1 & 2 Kings**) and cronies (**1 & 2 Chronicles**). The verdict was easy (**Ezra**). She had to bow knee high (**Nehemiah**) to Esther (**Esther**).”

Remember your goal: Within the next several weeks you should be able to recite all 39 books of the Old Testament and all 27 books of the New Testament by memory in your group meeting.

When you studied 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, 2 Timothy 1:8-10 and Titus 1:1-3, you were asked to focus on the nature of the universe. The phrases “*before the beginning of time*”, and “*before time began*” imply that the universe is not eternal; it is a finite creation with a fixed point of beginning. Now read these passages again and focus on what God was planning in relation to your salvation *before He created anything*.

How does the idea that God was planning the redemption of His people from eternity add to your understanding of a biblical worldview?

How does the idea that God was planning *your* redemption from eternity affect your view of God and the gift of your salvation?

MISSION – DIALOGUING

"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."(Philemon 1:6, NIV)

There are many valid ways to make the message of the gospel known, but the approach you will learn in *The Journey* is a way to talk with people about Jesus that is conversational instead of a presentation, and focuses on relationship building rather than confrontation. This approach isn't geared toward handing a pamphlet to a stranger or knocking on someone's door to discuss their eternal destiny. It's about engaging someone in conversation, showing a genuine interest in their life and asking non-threatening questions that could result in an opportunity to make the gospel known. The goal of this approach is that one friendly conversation would result in an opportunity to share a little book called, The Answer, and that a subsequent conversation might lead to an opportunity to investigate Christianity using the *Life Issues* booklets.

The Answer is an 80-page booklet that explains the human quest for glory, grace and truth. It is an engaging read that will prove useful for introducing people to the gospel. The four *Life Issues* booklets are a great tool you can use to guide someone in an investigation of Christianity. They offer a "CliffNotes"/"SparkNotes" approach to helping someone understand some of the big issues of the Christian faith.

Now who would want to engage in such an investigation with you? – Clearly not everyone, right? The people who would be most open to investigating Christianity with you are those with whom you have some sort of connection. They may be friends, neighbors or someone with whom you share a hobby or sport. Maybe you have served them in some way. Maybe they have opened up to you about problems with their job, marriage or kids. Or, perhaps through yours prayers for them, God has created an opportunity for you to nurture a missional connection.

So, how do you bring Jesus into a conversation with these people in a natural and non-threatening way? One key is to avoid talking about being a "Christian" at first. People have very different ideas of what it means to be a Christian, and so initially, it is better to talk generically about "spirituality" or "relating to God". Another key is to understand that many people, who would be alarmed by an abrupt question that challenges their spiritual beliefs, are otherwise open to talking generally about those beliefs. With these keys in mind, you can gradually shape a conversation to include spiritual matters using a few thoughtful questions about spiritual life. This will lead you to an opportunity to share a copy of The Answer. An illustration of how such a conversation might progress is described on the next page. Each missional conversation will reveal whether the person you're talking with is open to discussing spiritual matters. If so, learning this simple series of questions will help you engage in

Christ's mission to make the gospel known. If not, it is usually best to take a quick step back away from spiritual matters, and to simply build a connection through casual conversation.

Introducing The Answer

1. Spiritual Interest?

"Do you have any interest in spiritual things?"

Actively listen to his/her answer.

2. Spiritual Journey?

"How would you describe your spiritual journey so far?"

Actively listen to his/her answer.

"In my spiritual journey, I've discovered that the understanding of three words answered my main questions about how to have a healthy, meaningful spiritual life – **glory, grace** and **truth.**"

3. Heard about The Answer?

"Have you heard about a little book called, The Answer that explains these three words?"

Actively listen to his/her answer.

"I keep a copy with me and I'd be happy to give it to you if you would be interested in reading it."

4. Want The Answer?

"Would you like a copy?"

If yes...

"After you've read it I'd especially like to know what you think about the last five pages. I think you'll find them especially interesting."

Next week you'll learn more about introducing the *Life Issues* booklets. Until then, answer this question: How do you feel about holding a conversation like this with someone?

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