

God is Love Bible Curriculum

Unit Two: Restoring what was lost

Lesson 8: Believe in evolution

Memory Verse: When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. (2 Corinthians 10:12)

An old joke tells about two men camping on the African plain. Early one morning they hear a lion roaring and they realize the large cat is looking for food and has found them. One of them quickly finds his running shoes and frantically ties them on. His partner looks on in disbelief and says, "What are you doing that for? You can't outrun the lion!"

"I don't have to outrun the lion," the first man says. "I only have to outrun you."

It's dark humor and it shows someone who has no compassion for his "friend." But it illustrates a mindset that is so common in the world that many Christians fail to realize its real origins. It introduces the concept of competition. In our world the strong survive and the weak perish. It's called "survival of the fittest," and the principle has been used to suggest how evolution could explain the origin of life.

If you ask almost any Christian if they believe in evolution they will answer with an emphatic "No!" But there are two ways to believe in evolution. One, the issue most Christians think of when they say they don't believe in evolution, is if you believe that life just happened on this planet or if you believe that a supreme being, God, created the world.

But the other way to believe in evolution is to believe that the process of evolution, the struggle for survival and the competition for limited resources, is how the world SHOULD work. Far too many Christians believe in evolution quite firmly in this way. They bring competitive structures into play and learning and even their work lives and see no problem with doing so.

Recall that God designed the universe, and this world, to work on the principles of others-centered love. In competition you look out for yourself and put forward a lot of effort to promote yourself. This self-focus leads to fear and drives out love and compassion. Just like the man with the running shoes, you don't care about those around you, only about your own good.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:9, 10)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

When people study nature they see evolution at work. This is not a denial of creation, just a recognition that once sin entered this world every plant and animal on the planet was affected.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning

as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-22)

We shouldn't be surprised that we see evolution at work in the natural world. It's one of the results of sin that won't go away until sin has permanently gone away. And considering the poor job Christianity has done in teaching the world about God, we shouldn't be surprised that some people would rather believe there isn't a God than to believe Satan's lies about God.

When we see animals kill other animals for food, when we see them fighting over food or reproductive needs, we must understand that we're not seeing what God wanted the world to be; we're seeing what the world became after sin. We can see how all these animals suffer from problems that aren't their fault. And because we ourselves are subject to disease and decay, we can look forward to the restoration God has promised.

“The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
but dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy
in all my holy mountain,” says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:25)

Anywhere we see death and destruction we know we're not seeing things the way God wants them to be. And when someone suggests that we need competition to keep businesses honest and prices low, we know they don't yet understand God's law of love. Our competitive systems ruin people's lives and cause misery and death.

You and I as individual Christians don't have the power to change the world. Nor should we try to. God didn't call on us to change the world, but he did call on us to be transformed through “the renewing of [our] mind.” (Romans 12:2) We live in the world, but we don't have to think like the world thinks.

“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.” (John 17:14-19)

So next time someone asks you if you believe in evolution you can tell them that you believe evolution happens in the natural world, but that you don't believe that evolution is a very good explanation for the existence of life. You can say that you see evolution in human society but you don't believe that's the way God wanted the world to work.

In other words, you believe in evolution as a process that takes place in the world around us, including in the natural world, but you don't believe in evolution as a way to improve life either physically or socially. And because you believe in a God that grants absolute freedom to everyone in the universe, you don't need to believe in evolution to explain God away.

Possible thought papers:

1. Our text from Romans eight talks about the one who subjected the natural world to frustration. Who do you think that is? Why did that person do it?

2. Have you ever had a pet die? Talk about how it made you feel. Did it help to know that in the New Earth animals will have a much better life?
3. Discuss what it means to be “in the world, but not of the world.”