

## *Introducing Our Faith: The Living God*

### Worksheet for Week 5

#### God and Creation

This week, we turn to God and his creation. Because the relationship of creation and evolution continues to be part of the national debate in our classrooms, this worksheet will introduce you to a few key ideas in the debate.

#### *Creation and Evolution*

Since the birth of the Enlightenment more than 200 years ago, we've lived with an increasingly wide ditch between science and religion. Both have been seen as legitimate areas of study but they couldn't really be put together ~ we kept one in the attic, the other in the basement. Science has been seen as the source of all facts about the universe while religion has been left with matters of faith, devoid of any appeal to facts. I cannot count the number of books I've read that assert something like ~ "The bible is not a book about history or geography or science, it is a book about matters of faith."

In retrospect, this separation is somewhat odd, in that the development of modern science depended on the assumption of an orderly and predictable universe. What has changed over the years is the presumed explanation for that order and predictability. Early in the modern/scientific era, it was assumed that God was the designer of this order. However, responding to 19th century shifts in philosophical outlook, science began explicitly to remove a creator god from its worldview, substituting notions of impersonal mechanisms giving rise to the order of the universe. Of course, Darwin's general theory of evolution<sup>1</sup> was the main impetus to this development. With the explanatory vacancy created by the jettisoning of a creator god, Darwinism was shaped so as to provide a new story, a competing story that provided explanations for who we are, where we are, the problem and the solution.

It is very important to note the order of these developments. The loss of belief in a God who is actively involved in his creation left only two options for many in the West ~ that there is no god (atheism) or that God got the whole thing started but then left creation to its own devices (the absentee landlord of Deism). As science began to discover that the earth is very ancient and, at one time, was very different from now, a theory was needed to explain, in the absence of God, the plain fact that birds and bees actually do exist. Darwin provided the needed theory. Thus, Darwinism became as much a brute force explanation of all creation as the Christian God. In much of the scientific community, Darwinism became a necessary given in a world with no god. Just as Christians claim that the question of who created God is a nonsensical question ~ God simply is ~ scientific materialists<sup>2</sup> hold that the question of who created evolution is a nonsensical question ~ evolution simply is, needing no explanation or creator. To a materialist, evolution is a tenant of faith, a truism, not something to be proved.

I fear I am not being very clear. Perhaps an illustration of materialism as a philosophy or worldview will help. Richard Dawkins is a scientific materialist and one of the most gifted exponents of evolutionary theory. In his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Dawkins writes, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." This quote makes clear the whole materialist approach ~ no matter how much evidence one might amass for a designer of these complicated things, the evidence could be explained away as it could only give the appearance of design, it could never be evidence of design itself. Clearly, this is a philosophical statement, not a statement that could be based on scientific evidence or the scientific method.

Things evolve and change. We know that new species arise. But the question is whether, time and chance working on some sort of "eternal stuff" explains the existence of this glorious world. Many people in the world today say yes . . . but Christians, and Jews, and Muslims say no. We say that there is a creator god, who created everything there is, and who is actively involved in this world and with each of us.

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<sup>1</sup> Darwin proposed two theories. The first theory, sometimes referred to as micro-evolution, proposed that random mutation and natural selection creates lasting changes in species and can lead to the creation of new species. This first theory of evolution has been well-supported by scientific evidence. Much more controversial, at the time it was proposed and still today, is Darwin's more general theory of evolution which proposed that all of life has developed through the mechanisms of random mutation and natural selection. This more general theory is sometimes called macro-evolution and is what people usually mean when they refer to Darwinism, as I do.

<sup>2</sup> The materialist story, which is too often taken as fact, proposes that nature is made up solely of material stuff and that we and our world are solely the result of time, chance, random mutation, and natural selection acting on this eternal stuff.

## Bible Readings for Week 5

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage. What do you find most surprising in these readings? What do they tell us about God's nature?

<b>Day 1 Job 37 It is God, and God alone, who creates</b>	<b>Day 2 Psalm 8 Praising the Creator</b>
<b>Day 3 Isaiah 40:12-41:20 God creates and is always with us</b>	<b>Day 4 Matthew 10:29-31 &amp; 18:6-7 God cares!</b>
<b>Day 5 Isaiah 65:17-25 &amp; Rev 21:1-4 God will renew all of creation</b>	<b>Weekly Prayer Concerns</b>