

Session 6

Slide 1: What Should We Teach?

After examining the Theory of Evolution and seeing its weaknesses, it's natural for Christian educators to wonder, "What, then, should we teach? What is important for me to know and for my students to understand?" Of course, teachers must respond and adapt to the unique circumstances in his or her classroom and the unique needs of the individual students. What I present today should be considered a starting point, and teachers will undoubtedly make adjustments as needs arise.

Slide 2: Teach the Word!

The science aspect of Evolution may be questionable, but the reason we are considering the Theory is the spiritual threat it holds. The only way to deal with spiritual threats is through the Means of Grace. Do what you trained to do. Remember the reason you selected the public ministry. We want to proclaim God's Word!

No matter how strong or weak the scientific arguments for Evolution, the scientific community is not about to abandon Evolution, at least not in the foreseeable future. No matter. Our purpose is not to disprove the Theory on scientific grounds. Our mission is to proclaim the truth as revealed by God in His Word, which includes the miracle of creation.

Teach your students that God's Word needs no assistance from science. God's Word is true because it is God's Word. Expect some push back to this statement. Our credential-demanding society demands authentication. Expect the "how do we really know" questions. Be ready with a response. We know because God says so in His Word. The world's way of thinking will immediately reject this statement as circular reasoning. But when pressed, what credentials would satisfy our society? Who can authenticate God?

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the LORD. Is. 55:8

The only way that a person can accept Creation is through faith, worked by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works through the Means of Grace, not science. Creation is a miracle, as is faith. Miracles, by definition, defy science and cannot be proved. So, teach the Word!

A shift in the Evolution/Creation question has occurred. That shift is that this issue can be turned into an evangelism opportunity. Evolution can be a point of contact to start speaking about Scripture, Christ, and salvation. The sooner we can move the conversation away from the science and to Scripture, the better our mission will be served.

Can we stop here? Theoretically, I guess we could. But I believe that we can use this opportunity to even better prepare our students for the challenges that may lie ahead.

Slide 3: Teach the Role of Science

I have been using the word “debate” in this series to denote the struggle that may exist between science and faith, or between Creation and Evolution. A debate isn’t necessary if we keep in mind the relationship between Scripture and science, or any other human endeavor or discipline. Any human discipline is human, and therefore flawed. Disciplines and endeavors are flawed because people are sinful. Perfection vanished from Earth at the Fall and would reappear only in Christ. The relationship between Scripture and human endeavors is clear; Scripture is superior to, above, and not subject to any human endeavor, discipline, or wisdom. When this relationship is adhered to, things fall into place nicely.

Because humans are sinful, all we accomplish is tainted by sin, and therefore flawed. Science readily admits that the body of scientific knowledge changes as old ideas are discarded for new, or data and observation invalidates previously held beliefs and replace them with new. We should not be surprised that beliefs held by sinful humans often contradict Scripture. Unfortunately, in our pride, people often use contradictions between human beliefs and Scripture to indict Scripture.

On the other side, many well-meaning Christians have tried to use human disciplines, especially science, as a means to prove Scripture. Of course, the Christian looks at God’s amazing Creation, and see evidence of God’s qualities. But notice that faith must be present before the Christian can stand in awe of God. In the same vein, many of these Christians look to science to support our faith. We find it immensely satisfying, when a piece of supposed evidence is found, to exclaim, “See! The Bible really is true!” This type of thinking is dangerous. What is the reaction when the piece of evidence is no longer accepted? Will faith topple as well? Science can’t strengthen our faith, only the Means of Grace can.

Christians aren’t anti-science. We discussed this idea in greater depth in Session 2, so I won’t go over it again. It is worth repeating that God has blessed us with the intellectual gifts to do science, and He blesses us through it.

Slide 4: Oversimplification

Evolution is greatly sanitized and oversimplified in textbooks. I fully realize that a sixth-grade text must be simpler than the Evolutionary Biology text used by graduate students. But I am not talking about matching material to the level of the learner.

In the graphics, I have an image of a tricycle and the space shuttle. Imagine that I have written a document giving instructions for the manufacture of a tricycle. We would find, by the way, that if we included the necessary detail, the manufacturing directions would still be pretty involved. Evolutionary thinking would say that if I make enough copies of the directions, and if enough mistakes are made, and if I keep the process going for enough time, I will get new instructions. The instructions for a tricycle will morph into those for a bicycle, then a motorcycle, then a car, then a train, then a plane, until I have instructions for a space shuttle. This progression is not an exaggeration. We can point to the artifacts of the process. Some designs went extinct. We can even look at similar structures and surmise their development.

For genetic instructions to evolve from random bits of RNA to the genetics of a fully functional human is an even greater leap than my example. I won’t go into detail as I’m confident that you get the meaning.

While most would say that my example is ridiculous, Evolution states quite the opposite. Not only is this process possible, but this is also the way it actually happened. Back to the example. One might ask,

“The tricycle has no engine, not even a precursor to an engine. Even if an entire chapter of the directions were somehow accidentally copied, random copying errors on that new chapter would not produce a functional engine.” Evolution tells us that this is the way it must have happened.

Textbooks gloss over the tough questions. If the tough questions arise, eventually they must retreat to the position that it must have happened because here it is. The mechanisms may not be understood, but they must have happened.

Slide 5: Paradigm

A paradigm is defined as a mindset, a point of view, a lens through which we look at the world. Paradigms are so close to us that we rarely consider them; they are just part of the way we think. Paradigms are essential to science because a paradigm gives structure and meaning to the data and observations that scientists gather. The history of science shows the lengths to which the proponents of a particular paradigm will go rather than change paradigms, even when it seems clear that the paradigm has failed.

Evolution is a paradigm. What’s remarkable about Evolution is how quickly the paradigm was adopted. It seems the scientific community was ready for any theory which would exclude religious thought.

Without going into a lecture about the history of the Theory, the fact that Evolution is a paradigm is significant for this study because it affects how the scientific community looks at the “evidence” for Evolution. Since Evolution is the accepted paradigm, all of biology is seen as evidence for Evolution. Trying to disprove some pieces of evidence will not change the paradigm. The Theory has undergone significant changes since Darwin’s time, yet the paradigm remains.

What does this mean for the teacher? First, we should teach the concept of the paradigm, and that Evolution is such a paradigm. We should teach that Creation is also a paradigm, but this paradigm comes from our Lord. We should teach that the scientific community is no longer proving Evolution; for them, it is just true. We should show students how a paradigm influences our vision. Data and observations never speak for themselves. They are inanimate and require interpretation. Interpretation relies on the paradigm.

There is also a degree of comfort, even relief, for the teacher. The teacher does not need to be an expert in Biology to talk about evolution. The teacher does not need to be able to understand all the evidence and be able to spot the flaws. Remember that if Evolution is the paradigm, all evidence will be interpreted to support the paradigm. Hold up Creation as the paradigm. The same data and observations can be interpreted through the paradigm of Creation.

Slide 6: Time

Evolution absolutely relies on extensive time periods. Evolutionists feel free to give themselves all the time they require for anything to happen. My colleague at MLC, Greg Diersen, observed, “The universe has aged a few billion years since I graduated high school.”

The underlying idea is that, given enough time, anything can happen. Recall the example of a tricycle evolving into the space shuttle. With enough time, enough mutations can accumulate, and we get the complexity and diversity of life forms that has or will exist.

Time does not make the impossible possible.

Slide 7: We Agree

I believe this to be a crucial point because here is where we may inadvertently do our students a disservice. Too often, I believe, when Evolution is encountered, we are prone to respond, “That’s Evolution, and we don’t believe that; we believe Creation.” The lesson continues. By lumping together all the “evidence” that Evolutionists use with the paradigm and dismissing it as a whole, we give the students the impression that we Christians reject the science along with the paradigm. When students learn the science in a different context, a public high school or university, for example, and see that the science is good and valid, they may become confused.

The student may think, “The science is logical and valid. I see no problems with it. Maybe there is something to Evolution.” If we unconsciously link the science with the paradigm, we give students the impression that we Christians promote an all-or-nothing mentality.

We Christians agree with much of what Evolutionists would call evidence for their Theory. We don’t disagree with the science; we disagree with the paradigm. A list of some of the concepts normally associated with Evolution, and with which we Christians can agree, appears on the slide.

My colleague, Greg Diersen, explains this concept using the word “capabilities.” God created His creatures with the capability to adapt, within the scope of their kinds, to changing environments. These capabilities are limited. A snake won’t grow fur, nor will an otter develop gills. But species can change and adapt. These changes, within the kind, fall under the heading of microevolution. We Christians don’t dispute microevolution.

Slide 8: The Leap

I have used this graphic before, but it bears repeating. We Christians can accept the science that falls within the realm of microevolution. We don’t agree with the next step that Evolutionists take, and it’s a big step. Evolutionist thinking states that, since we see changes occurring at the microevolution level, with enough time, changes take place at the macroevolution level. In other words, one kind can evolve into a new kind. A kind consisting of a single cell may evolve into a kind that is multicelled. A kind of amphibian may evolve into a kind of mammal. Here is where Christians disagree, and this is what we must show our students. Accepting the science in microevolution does not obligate us to accept macroevolution. We do not take “the leap.”

Slide 9: We Don’t Know

How old is the universe? What formed the Grand Canyon? What killed the dinosaurs? Did God create viruses?

As we study the Word, we quickly realize that God doesn’t answer every question we may have, nor does He ever promise to do so. It is essential that we not hold God to a promise that He didn’t make

Ultimately, we may never arrive at answers that will satisfy us. We should not be concerned, however. An unanswered question does not discredit Scripture. Faith accepts that God inspired His Word, and faith accepts the fact that questions unanswered are still in the realm of God’s control, and we can be

content with that. We can rejoice that we have a God whose wisdom far surpasses ours. What good is a god who is no more intelligent or wise than his followers?

Our students are accustomed to instant answers. At no time in history has so much knowledge been so readily available. Students are not accustomed to unanswered questions. We can model Job's response when God questioned him:

"I know that you can do all things;

no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?'

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,

things too wonderful for me to know. Job 42:2-3