

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 1.10



In this month's issue, the *Dawn Treader* will be taking a trip into the topic of God as Creator, dealing with some of today's most pressing questions: stewardship of the planet, religion vs. science, and the nature of God's existence.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: GOD'S CREATION

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

The Bible tells us in Genesis that God created the world and made man in His own image, intending for us to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The Nicene Creed begins: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." So understanding creation is of key importance in understanding our relationship with God. *For week one, ask the first question below over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.*

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Resource of the Month

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist

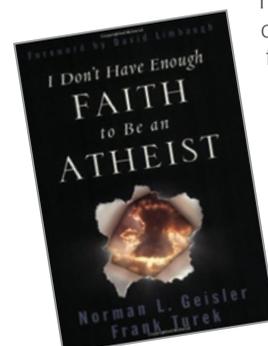
– Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek

To some, the concept of having faith in a higher power or a set of religious beliefs is nonsensical. Indeed, many view religion in general, and Christianity in particular, as unfounded and unreasonable.

In this excellent book, however, Norman Geisler and Frank Turek argue that Christianity is not only more reasonable than all other belief systems, but is indeed more rational than unbelief itself. With conviction and clear thinking, Geisler and Turek guide readers through some of the traditional, tested arguments for the existence of a creator God. They move into an examination of the source of morality and the reliability of the New

Testament accounts concerning Jesus. The final section of the book deals with a detailed investigation of the claims of Christ.

This book is recommended for high school and college students and their parents.



FOCUS OF THE MONTH: GOD'S CREATION

Week One: How do we know God created the world? (Genesis 1:1, Psalm 19:1)
The world is so complex that only a very wise Creator could have made it.
The world is so beautiful and wonderful that only a very loving Father would have made it.
The world is full of people who desire relationships and have spiritual desires, which can only result from our having been created by a relational Being Who "is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)
Creation is the only explanation of the world's existence that is historically documented; nearly all ancient cultures have creation stories that are clearly based on the original Creation story recorded in Genesis.

Week Two: What does the Creation tell us about God? (Psalms 104, 135, and 139)
He is all-powerful; "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3)
He is very creative and imaginative: He can make real worlds with real people just as easily as we make up imaginary worlds with imaginary people in books and plays—God is the first and greatest Artist, so there is no point in making idols out of lesser human artists; they are only imitating their Maker, Who is the One Who really deserves all our worship!
God loves us; He made the whole universe for us and He made us in order to love us and have us live forever in a relationship of love with Him.

Week Three: Why did God put humanity in charge of taking care of the earth? (Genesis 1:26-31, Psalm 8)
Because we are made in His image and so specially equipped for doing things His way.
Because He wants us to learn to have the same sense of responsibility and love for His Creation that He has.
Because like all good parents, God wants His children to learn to be creative and fulfill their full potential, by giving them the authority to make important decisions and take care of things themselves.

Week Four: How can we be good stewards of God's Creation? (Proverbs 12: 10, Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Timothy 5:18)
By appreciating what He has given us.
By wisely using the world's resources, including ourselves and our God-given talents, for the good of everyone.
By being kind to and appreciative of all other people, since God made all of them and loves them too.
By taking care of our pets and other animals under our care.
By remembering and telling others that every good thing comes from God.
By rejoicing in the world's beauty and praising God for it.



Theologian Theodore Conversation Corner

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WAS THE WORLD MADE? BY WHOM OR WHAT?

Theodore: Hello, Matt! Isn't it a beautiful day?

Matt: It sure is. Amazing, when you come to think of it.

Theo: What do you mean?

Matt: I mean, when you think of all the innumerable processes that have to go on—all the varying combinations of atoms that go into making up the sky, the trees, the rocks, and all the rest of it—and then the workings of our DNA that enable us to see it all and appreciate its beauty; it's all so complex that it's unbelievable.

Theo: Quite. But it's real.

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Theologian Theodore (CONTD)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WAS THE WORLD MADE? BY WHOM OR WHAT?

Matt: It is, strangely enough, and it makes you realize just how lucky we all are. You know, if you took the same stuff back to the Big Bang and did it all over again, you wouldn't get us here again if you tried a million zillion times. Wouldn't even get the most basic forms of life, let alone beautiful ones.

Theo: Well, of course I wouldn't. God still would, though. He knows everything about life, down to the most exact equations needed to keep the right balance in His Creation.

Matt: I guess. But that doesn't help explain how we got here.

Theo: Why, I should like to know what else *would*, in that case, Matt?

Matt: Well, Theo, you know I believe in keeping religion and science separate. After all, if you don't, they invariably come into conflict. So if you want to believe that God knows everything about everything, spiritually speaking, I don't mind that. But that doesn't mean you can bring Him in to explaining anything in the natural world.

Theo: If you're going to try and keep the natural and spiritual realms completely separate, you'll never get very far in understanding anything, Matt. Everything that happens in the natural world—birth, death, growth, invention, discovery, war, progress of every kind—it all has its roots in some kind of deep desire for something that cannot be explained in natural terms. Science works in terms of laws—of logical patterns. The Greeks saw this as being a form of beauty. Well, beauty is not something natural; it's spiritual, although it requires natural forms of expression. The natural and spiritual are necessarily interlinked. And in the Incarnation: God became man, in the closest link ever between the spiritual and natural worlds. Evidently that is what God intended, when He created the universe.

Matt: I think we're talking a bit at cross-purposes, Theo. I don't think that beauty *is* spiritual. I think it's scientific; we just haven't discovered the gene that explains what causes us to notice it yet.

Theo: Even if you could explain our ability to notice and evaluate beauty in terms of our genes, it wouldn't explain the concrete existence of such abstract ideas as beauty, affection, virtue—or even the desire for scientific discovery and understanding that enables us to find out scientific facts. Scientific research depends on a spiritual desire to know more about God's Creation; there's no other reason to explain it. A mere random collection of atoms would feel no desire to understand the processes by which it had been created—any more than a character in a novel wants to know why its author has given it a certain kind of personality and life story. Even the cleverest and most advanced creatures, humans, can't give the machines we create the ability to wonder or worship. It follows, then, that the means by which we humans were created must have been a much more powerful Designer than ourselves—and One who wanted to endow His Creation with spiritual as well as natural abilities.

Matt: Well, I don't know. Maybe all our abstract ideas are just the result of chance reactions of atoms that cause us to hallucinate the existence of spiritual beings that don't really exist. Doesn't sound very appealing, but it's possible.

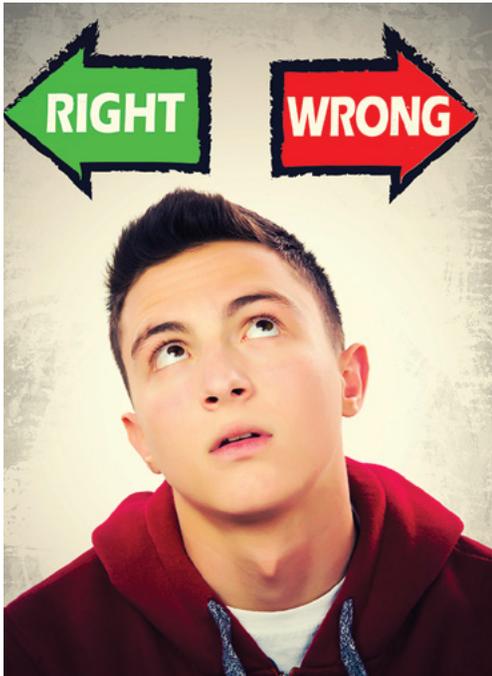
Theo: I don't think it is, Matt. Even when people see mirages of water in the desert or otherwise imagine that something exists when it doesn't, that something always has a counterpart in the real world, just not in that place at that time. Philosophers like to talk about "the unicorn in the back of the room"; well, if I imagined a unicorn was there, it wouldn't be, of course; but I wouldn't have been able to fancy it was if such things as horses and horns didn't really exist and I had seen them and was able to put them together in my mind. The fact that people believe in spiritual realities doesn't mean that every spiritual creature anyone has ever come up with in mythology exists, but it does mean that there must be *some* spiritual realities that their ideas were based on.

Matt: Hm. You make a very strong case for your point of view, Theo.

Theo: And there's another angle on it that is even more significant. Even if abstract ideas could be physical hallucinations, every human being still possesses something else that could never be explained in natural terms.



QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WAS THE WORLD MADE? BY WHOM OR WHAT?



Matt: What is that?

Theo: Our moral sense: that which tells us the distinction between right and wrong; our conscience, you might say. Now, as C.S. Lewis has explained, there is no possibility that “the Moral Law ... [has] been developed just like all our other instincts,”¹ because it asserts authority over all our natural impulses as human “animals.” “If two instincts are in conflict, and there is nothing in a creature’s mind except those two instincts, obviously the stronger of the two must win. But at those moments when we are most conscious of the Moral Law, it usually seems to be telling us to side with the weaker of the two impulses...clearly we are not acting *from* instinct when we set about making an instinct stronger than it is. The thing that says to you, ‘Your herd instinct is asleep. Wake it up,’ cannot itself *be* the herd instinct.”²

Matt: I see what you mean. But couldn’t the Moral Law just be the strongest instinct we have?

Theo: But if that were the case, it would always have to win out over our weaker instincts, and we would always behave righteously. But the fact is that we don’t. As Lewis put it, “These, then, are the two points I wanted to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave that way.”³ If virtue and moral law was a human invention, of

course we could keep it as long as we wanted to. But even when we want to be good, as the apostle Paul wrote: “the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19). So the only possible explanation is that we were created by a good and holy God, and so we remember the Moral Law since we have been created in His Image; but we can’t keep it on our own because we didn’t create the Moral Law ourselves. Only God can create.

Matt: I’m beginning to think you might be right about that. However, I still maintain my point that started off our conversation, all the more under the created circumstances: the world we’ve been given is amazing, it’s unbelievable, and it makes you realize just how lucky we all are.

Theo: Or blessed, if we were to put it in spiritual terms!

Ask your children: What do you think about Theo’s answers to Matt’s questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give if someone asked them a question like Matt’s.

Prayer of the Month

THANKING GOD FOR HIS CREATION

This prayer, thanking God for His Creation and asking for wisdom to use it well, can be said at any time of the day—any time when something wonderful in God’s world reminds us to turn and tell Him how wonderful He is!

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¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. 9.

² *Ibid.* p. 10.

³ *Ibid.* p. 8.

Prayer of the Month

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THANKING GOD FOR HIS CREATION

Dear God,
You are the fount of all blessings,
source of all life,
and giver of all grace:

We thank You for the gift of life:
for air, food, and water;
for the love of family and friends;
for all the things without which
we couldn't continue to live.

We thank You for the mystery of creation:
for the beauty that the eye can see,
for the marvels that the ear can hear,
for all the amazing mysteries that fill
the universe with wonder.

Help us to grow in knowledge and
appreciation of Your Creation,
To be good stewards of what You have given us,
And to always remember that every good gift
comes only from You.

We thank You for this day and for our life.
We thank You that You are our God, our Creator,
and our Savior.

For these, and all blessings,
we give You thanks, eternal, loving God,
through Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.



Activity of the Month

EXPLORING CREATION



This month, plan a special family outing to enjoy God's Creation—go to visit a local park or take a trip to a famous natural landmark; if your children are older, try camping out or some other nighttime outing that will give them an opportunity to look at all the stars and try to count them, like Abraham (Genesis 15:5-6). Discuss how the vast grandeur of nature's beauty points us to God, and why we should want to take care of it. Maybe the outing could include some form of nature conservation service, volunteering to plant trees or clear away litter in a local place in need of such community service. Use this as an opportunity to talk with your children about how all service is meant to be service toward God.



KEEPING THE
FAITH

What is Keeping the Faith? The Keeping the Faith program is a unique study-plus-fellowship experience featuring the Aslan Academy Small Group model centered around the Keeping the Faith guidebook. It is designed to equip parents, grandparents and other caring adults for intentional discipleship of their children and teens. Dawn Treader is a monthly newsletter filled with activities and ideas geared to help you to disciple the children in your lives from preschool through the teen years. To learn more about the program, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KTFResources