

ANSWERING FOOLS

Proverbs 26:4,5; Genesis 3:1-7

INTRODUCTION: *Worldviews revolve around three basic concepts:*

1. Creation: *Where did we come from, and who are we?* This is addressed in Gen.1-2
2. Fall: *What has gone wrong with the world?* This is addressed in Genesis 3.
3. Redemption: *What can be done to fix the world?* The answer to this begins in Genesis 3:15 and is developed throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

I. THE SERPENT'S TEMPTATION OF EVE WAS AN ASSAULT UPON GOD AND HIS CREATION.

- A. The doctrine of creation affirms the absolute priority of Almighty God. He is the originator and final interpreter of reality (Genesis 1-3).
- B. The serpent questioned the Creator's authority to interpret His creation. The serpent questioned God's authority to define man's role in the created world (Genesis 3:1-6).
- C. The temptation is in some ways the reversal of the Incarnation (Philippians 2:1-11).
 1. Jesus was God and yet did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the nature of a servant.
 2. Adam and Eve were not equal with God and yet they considered equality with God something to be grabbed.
- D. The serpent's redefining of God's word and world is a temptation we still face today.

II. DO NOT ANSWER A FOOL...ANSWER A FOOL (Proverbs 26:4,5)

- A. "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself" (**Prov.26:4**).
 1. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalm 10:4; 14:1; 53:1; Prov.1:7)
 2. The fool denies the biblical doctrine of CREATION. Don't answer the fool based upon his foolish assumptions. Don't pretend with the fool that God is irrelevant to the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.
- B. "Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes." (**Prov.26:5**)
 1. Verse 5 means that we should show fools the absurdity of their rejection of God.
 2. Answer the fool according to his folly and expose him for what he truly is.

III. THE FOOL ANSWERED AND THE QUESTION OF EDUCATING

- A. Don't assume that the non-Christian's goal of education is the same as your goal as a Christian. Ask educators what the goal of education is.
- B. So many times, Christians answer fools according to their folly. We assume with them that we have the same goals and purposes in life. We forget that they are not fellow travelers with us on the narrow road to eternal life.
 1. Christians cannot agree with non-Christians about the significance of historical facts like Columbus' discovery of America in 1492.
 2. Historically, most mathematicians have believed that mathematical truths such as " $2+2=4$ " exist independently of human minds, being universally and eternally true.
 - a. The question that still baffles mathematicians and philosophers is: "If mathematics were not God-given, why should it be true?" Or to put this question another way: "If mathematics is merely a human invention, why is it that relatively simple mathematical theories yield such accurate representations of the physical world?"
 - b. The soundness of mathematics is accepted largely on faith.
- C. Teachers, you should now how the subjects you teach reflects a biblical worldview and you should be able to answer fools according to their folly.

"As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality,"
Albert Einstein; quoted in Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, ch. 2 (1975).

IV. THE FOOL ANSWERED AND THE QUESTION OF EDUCATION

- A. The Christian says that the ultimate goal of education is the glory of God (**Col.3:17**).
- B. Christianity says that knowledge is desirable because all true knowledge teaches us about God (**Prov.4:5-9**).
- C. According to our foolish public school system, God is irrelevant to the pursuit of knowledge. What then is the purpose of giving up 12-20 years of your life in a classroom?
- D. In our foolish world, the primary motivation for education is for selfish reasons.
 - 1. "Good grades are necessary for college."
 - 2. "College is necessary for a good job."
- E. If education is nothing more than a means for humanity's selfish ends then why should the student study and make sacrifices now? Lots of people do well in the real world who never did well in school. Lots of people do poorly in the real world who aced school.
- F. If education exists for my selfish ends then why not cheat to get good grades? Why not plagiarize? Why not copy somebody else's homework?
 - 1. The fool has no ultimate foundation for saying that lying, cheating, and plagiarizing are absolutely wrong.
 - 2. Lying, cheating, and plagiarizing are wrong from a biblical worldview.

V. SMART "FOOLS": CALLING THE WORLD TO REPENT OF ITS INTELLECTUAL REBELLION AGAINST GOD

- A. Any true knowledge that unbelievers have ultimately belongs to God.
 - 1. The life that the Prodigal Son enjoyed only came from his father's inheritance.
 - a. Unbelievers are living like prodigals who have turned their back to God.
 - b. The foundation unbelievers build their lives, hopes, and philosophies on is borrowed from God.
 - 2. The unbeliever is like a cattle rustler. God has branded every "fact" of creation as His own.
 - a. The entire universe is a revelation of the glory of God (Gen.1).
 - b. The heavens are shouting out: "God is glorious" (Psalm 19).
 - c. God's works of providence are shouting out that God is glorious.
 - d. The flowers of the field, the sparrows in the air, and the cattle on a thousand hills are a revelation of God.
- B. All of life is an evangelistic opportunity.
 - 1. Our goal in evangelism is to show unbelievers how they are living like prodigals.
 - 2. Our goal is to show unbelievers that morally, ethically, and intellectually they are bankrupt.
 - 3. Our goal is to prayerfully bring unbelievers to their senses and that the Holy Spirit would enable them to realize that they can eat from the Creator's Table instead of pig troughs.
 - 4. Our goal is to see people repent and say, "God, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight."

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:

Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer for yourself, your family, the church and/or your nation. Remember that prayer consists in Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (Feel free to use the outline for praying).

How was the serpent's temptation of Eve an assault upon God and God's creation?

How was Adam and Eve's sin a kind of reversal of the Incarnation?

What did Solomon mean when he said, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes."

How did Eve answer the serpent according to his folly?

In what ways are you answering fools according to their own folly? (i.e. Do you make assumptions that unbelievers have the same goals and purposes in life as a Christian?)

How can you improve your witness to unbelievers by exposing their unbiblical worldview? (i.e. How can you Answer a fool that he not be wise in his own eyes?)

*Christianity has tended to focus on society's "moral bankruptcy" and has neglected to address our culture's "intellectual bankruptcy." In what ways has this been detrimental to the Gospel message? In what ways has this been detrimental to the claims of Christ over **all** cultural pursuits?*

ILLUSTRATION

The serpent's redefining of God's word and world is a temptation we still face today. It is the question of truth.

When asked to define my Unitarianism I usually answer that I believe each life experience is unique, therefore each person's understanding of the spiritual dimension has to be unique, and ultimately we must be our own authority in matters of belief.

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This is Satanic. But this is the primary belief of the world and it is not unique to Unitarians.

Shortly before, he died, the Buddha said to his followers: "Be you lamps unto yourselves; be your own reliance. Hold to the truth within yourselves, as to the only lamp."

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This again is Satanic. Truth does not originate within us. God is the source of all truth. His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.

The poet Robert Browning wrote: "Truth is within ourselves, it takes no rise from outward things, whate'er you may believe. There is an inmost centre in us all, where truth abides in fullness..."

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In Genesis 3:6, Eve tried making a judgment independent from God's revealed Word. She listened to the serpent's lie that, ultimately, she must be her own authority in matters of belief. She rejected the lamp of God's Word and chose to be her own reliance. She judged based upon her observation,

Genesis 3:6

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (NASB95)

Historically, most mathematicians have believed that mathematical truths such as "2+2=4" exist independently of human minds, being universally and eternally true. **But the question that still baffles mathematicians and philosophers is: If mathematics were not God-given, why should it be true.** Or to put this question another way: **If mathematics is merely a human invention, why is it that relatively simple mathematical theories yield such accurate representations of the physical world?**¹

You may not realize this, but the soundness of mathematics is accepted largely on faith (<http://faith.csc.twu.ca/~byl/TH.htm>; extremely helpful!). Roger Penrose (1989: 112), not a Christian, but one of the outstanding mathematicians of the 20th century wrote in 1989, "There is something absolute and 'God given' about mathematical truth." (<http://faith.csc.twu.ca/~byl/TH.htm>).²

¹ Einstein discovered the general theory of relativity as the result of a seven-year search for a beautiful equation. *That was how he found it.* The point is this: Newton's and Einstein's ability to penetrate the deep secrets of the physical world surely far exceeded anything that could be explained purely in terms of survival value or evolution.

² Eugene Wigner, a Nobel prizewinner in physics, in a famous article entitled "The Unreasonable Effectiveness Of Mathematics", commented on the amazing applicability of complex analysis to quantum mechanics:

"It is difficult to avoid the impression that a miracle confronts us here, quite comparable to the...miracles of the existence of laws of nature and of the human mind's capacity to divine them" (Wigner: 8)

"The miracle of the appropriateness of the language of mathematics for the formulation of the laws of physics is a wonderful gift which we neither understand nor deserve" (Wigner: 14).

